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Mother Teresa, portrait of the week by Bahgory 8



MPs gather

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak officially opens the International Parliamentary Conference today which will be attended by over 1,600 participants representing 134 countries. Mubarak is scheduled to present a working paper dealing with the role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in propelling forward the pace of democratisation throughout the world.

The Conference will issue the Cairo declaration on world parliaments' relations with peoples, human rights and multiparty pluralism.

Russia visit

PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak will make an official two-day visit to Moscow during the last week of September, at the invitation of Russian President Boris Yeltsin. The two leaders will discuss bilateral relations and the latest developments in the peace process.

President Mubarak is also due to receive Turkish President Suleyman Demirel this Tuesday. The latest reports on joint Turkish-Israeli-American naval manoeuvres, the situation in northern Iraq and the peace process are expected to be high on the meeting's agenda. *(See p. 5)*

Nile tiger

EGYPT will issue five-year sovereign bonds worth between $250 and $300 million before the end of this year to make it easier for the business community to borrow from abroad, Finance Minister Mohieddin El-Gharib announced at a conference organised by *Euromoney* magazine in Cairo this week.

During the conference, entitled "Egypt: Tiger on the Nile", government officials announced a new programme to privatise a large number of state-owned hotels and tourist establishments that have long been on the government's privatisation agenda.

The conference was inaugurated by Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri and attended by a large number of representatives of local and foreign businesses and international financial institutions.

Shaab ban

CAIRO's southern court yesterday ordered a three-issue ban against *Al-Shaab*, the twice-weekly mouthpiece of the Islamist-oriented Labour Party. The reason given was the violation of an earlier order by the prosecutor-general prohibiting the release of any new information related to the dispute between *Al-Shaab* and Interior Minister Hassan El-Alfi.

The ban, which was requested by Prosecutor-General Ragaa El-Arabi, means the editions of *Al-Shaab* due to appear Friday, Tuesday and next Friday will not be published.

The prosecutor had made the original order after Interior Minister El-Alfy filed a libel suit against *Al-Shaab* for circulating "false" information about him, so as to prevent further "leaks" from influencing the investigations.

INSIDE

At the centre of her agenda

Albright launched her mission to rescue the collapsing peace process by insisting the Palestinians crack down on terrorism

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright joined Israel yesterday in demanding that Yasser Arafat wage an uncompromising war on Islamist militants if he wants to rescue the Middle East peace process.

At the start of her mission to salvage the historic peace effort launched four years ago, Albright also admonished Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, telling him he must create a climate of trust by treating the Palestinians as partners. However, her emphasis was clearly weighted toward Israel's security concerns, in the wake of two recent suicide bombings by Islamist militants that killed 25 people.

Albright said she would tell the Palestinian leader in their meeting today that "security is at the centre of my agenda." "There is no moral equivalence between killing people and building houses," Albright said, referring to Palestinian demands that Israel freeze Jewish settlement construction as a condition for resuming negotiations that have been suspended since March. Speaking after a three-hour meeting with Netanyahu in Jerusalem, Albright said the Palestinians must resume security cooperation with Israel and also take unilateral action to crush the infrastructure of the terrorist groups.

The Palestinians have accused Netanyahu of trying to sabotage the peace process and of using last week's Jerusalem bombing as a pretext to stop the scheduled handover of West Bank land.

Netanyahu said that he remained committed to the peace process. Turning to Albright, he declared: "If you are able to persuade the Palestinian Authority to wage war against the terrorists, then I believe the road will be open to continue the peace process to a successful conclusion and I am convinced we can achieve peace." Netanyahu offered to ease some of the restrictions imposed on the Palestinians, including a sweeping travel ban, if their leaders delivered on the issue of terrorism.

Albright told Netanyahu she expected Israel to refrain from any unilateral steps that would preempt negotiations on a final settlement. This was apparently a reference to Israel's construction of a Jewish neighbourhood in Arab East Jerusalem and the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. "Clearly Israel also has a responsibility to shape an environment which will give that process a chance to succeed. This means that Israel should be taking steps that build confidence and refrain from actions that undermine confidence and trust," Albright said. She added, "It is very difficult to create a serious environment for negotiations when unilateral actions are taken that pre-empt or prejudge issues reserved for permanent status negotiations."





Declaring that Israel's security lay at the centre of her agenda, US State Secretary Albright embraced Netanyahu's priorities and began her first Middle East visit by disillusioning the Palestinian and Arab parties to the peace process. (Above) Albright is greeted by the Israeli prime minister at his Jerusalem office, while in the West Bank city of Nablus (right), Palestinians underline their anger at Washington's pro-Israel bias by burning a composite US-Israeli flag. *(photos: AFP)*

A senior Palestinian official, Hanan Ashrawi, was sharply critical of the way Albright began her one-week visit to the region, saying she displayed a "wholeheartedly one-sided approach."

Palestinian security officials reported that they have questioned 200 Hamas activists and have detained 110 since the 4 September suicide bombing in Jerusalem. Fifteen of the total were held overnight. However, David Bar-Illan, a top Netanyahu aide, considered the arrests "cosmetic and a gesture to the Secretary of State rather than an effective step against the terrorist organisations."

Bar-Illan said Netanyahu would propose to Albright that efforts to force further Israeli troop withdrawals be put aside. Talks would instead focus on final status issues, such as borders, refugees, Jewish settlements and Jerusalem. "We prefer to dispense with the whole interim agreement stages mainly because instead of promoting confidence they seem to promote nothing but irritations and confrontations," he explained.

Israel's President Ezer Weizman told Albright she should pressure Netanyahu to go ahead with the next troop withdrawal, according to a senior US official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Israel Radio quoted Weizman as telling Albright that she should "bang Arafat's and Netanyahu's heads together."

Ashrawi, speaking to reporters in the West Bank town of Ramallah, said Albright's allusion to Israel's violations was only a "symbolic gesture". "At some point, the United States has to decide whether it wants to serve only Israeli interests or whether it wants to serve the interests of peace in the region," said Ashrawi.

Albright and Weizman visited a hospital where the American Secretary of State held hands with Americans and Israelis wounded in the recent suicide bombings.

Daniel Miller, a 19-year-old Jewish seminary student from Miami, gave Albright a letter in which he urged her to be tough with Arafat and force him to go after Islamist militants. He told Albright to remember the bombing victims "when you go to embrace Arafat." Albright, apparently somewhat irritated, replied curtly: "I don't intend to embrace Arafat." It would seem the metaphor was lost upon her.

Speaking at the meeting with Weizman, Albright backed Israeli demands that Arafat take tougher action. "We are with you in the battle against terror and the struggle for security," she said. "We are with you in your insistence that the Palestinian Authority fulfill the responsibilities and obligations that it has undertaken."

The remarks drew an angry reaction from Marwan Kanafani, Arafat's media adviser. "Her statements don't augur well for the future. We hoped she would take a fairly balanced approach to the issues. I am very disappointed," Kanafani said. "If these remarks epitomise her mission in the area, she will fail in her task to bring the peace process back on track."

In Cairo, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said that security should not be the only concern of the visiting US official, who is expected to meet with President Hosni Mubarak on Saturday. "Security is one of the main items on Ms Albright's agenda, but here in Egypt we are going to talk about the situation as a whole," Moussa said. "We know that security is an important issue but it should not be, and is not the only item" worthy of attention.

Asked about Israeli reports that Albright would seek a 45-day freeze on settlement construction as a confidence-building gesture, Moussa said the decision rested with the Palestinians. He added, however, that "it is not a question of a pause or a halt. Building settlements is illegal."

In the West Bank town of Nablus, some 200 women protesters affiliated with the Islamist militant group Hamas accused Albright of trying to pressure the Palestinians to submit to Israeli demands on security. The protesters burned an American flag and then a poster of Albright dressed as the Statue of Liberty wearing a necklace bearing the Star of David while stabbing a Palestinian with a knife labelled "Israeli dictates." They carried signs declaring "What about Palestinian security?" and "Albright, your pressure on the Palestinian Authority to make arrests violates human rights."

In a four-page document released Tuesday, Israel demanded that the Palestinians arrest a large number of Hamas activists, disarm the group and cut off funding. Israel also said the Palestinians must reduce their police force from 35,000 to 24,000, as stipulated in the Oslo agreement, dismiss the police chief who is suspected of incitement against Israel, and agree to Israeli and US monitoring to ensure compliance.

(see pp.4&5)

Dim prospects for Albright's visit

Pessimism greeted Secretary of State Albright as she began her first tour of the Middle East. **Dina Ezzat** writes

On the eve of the fourth anniversary of the Oslo Accords that were meant to open the way for a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright arrived in the region to try to broker a deal that may have very little to do with the original accords.

For over six months, Middle East peace-making has faced an unbreakable log-jam. "Never since the Madrid conference of October1991 has the [peace] process been confronted with such a crisis that could make or break it," Foreign Minister Amr Moussa said Tuesday.

The Palestinian-Israeli talks ground to a halt last March when Tel Aviv started building a Jewish quarter in occupied Arab East Jerusalem.

"Mr [Binyamin] Netanyahu [the Israeli Prime Minister] has shown no compliance with the Oslo Accords that carry the signatures of US President Bill Clinton and other world leaders; what we want now is full American involvement to guarantee that whatever future agreements may be reached will be seriously implemented by the Israeli side," said Saeb Ereikat, chief Palestinian negotiator.

From now on, he explained, peace-making has to be pursued in "a trilateral relationship that includes the US with the Palestinians and the Israelis to ensure that Washington will follow up on implementation".

Palestinian and Egyptian officials concede that the Oslo-based peace process is not working and they also say that the Palestinian Authority is open to new suggestions.

In this connection, Ereikat disclosed, "unofficial" Palestinian and Israeli delegations have been meeting in both Norway and Sweden throughout the last few weeks to try and generate a new momentum for the stalled peace effort.

"The Oslo agreements are in serious danger," stated Moussa, urging Israel to show its commitment to the full implementation of the original provisions.

For their part, the Israelis claim that the Palestinians have not discharged their commitment to fight terrorism. Shortly before Albright's arrival, Netanyahu's office issued a list of 10 security demands it said the Palestinian Authority had to meet in order to ensure "the integrity of the peace process".

"We think that the Palestinians have taken many steps with regard to fighting terrorism," said Mohamed Bassiouni, the Egyptian ambassador in Tel Aviv. "Now there are clear obligations, according to the signed agreements, that the Israelis have to fulfil."

Ereikat agreed: "We have done all that we had to do. But we are not going to act as another security department for the Israeli prime minister".

Although he said that he did not want to jump to conclusions, the chief Palestinian negotiator conceded he was pessimistic about the outcome of Albright's visit. He expressed concern that her agenda hinged solely on Israel's security demands.

His scepticism is shared by the Egyptians. An Egyptian diplomat told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that while Cairo officially welcomed Albright's efforts, a slight improvement, but no breakthrough, was all that might be expected.

As far as Cairo is concerned, the success of Albright's visit will depend on her ability to persuade Netanyahu to soften his intransigent policies.

According to Moussa, the current Israeli policy will not lead to "a meaningful, acceptable, fair and just settlement". He asserted that "Mr Netanyahu will have to be told in no uncertain terms by everybody, in particular the Americans, that this way, this policy, these practices, these actions do threaten the future of relations in this region".

However, in the run-up to the Albright visit, Washington re-asserted that it is not going to exercise any pressure on the Israeli prime minister.

According to an Egyptian diplomat, the Israelis and Palestinians will have to consider a US-proposed package-deal under which the Palestinian Authority would crack down on Islamist militants in return for a brief moratorium on settlement construction. In the meantime, talks should now be opened on the final status of the Occupied Territories.

In the view of political analysts, the fact that the Arabs have very few bargaining chips make it almost inevitable that Albright will take the Israelis' point of view.

Some believe that the only real card in the Arabs' hands is their participation in, or absence from, the Middle East/North Africa economic summit, scheduled for November in Qatar. The Palestinians hope that this summit will be cancelled or boycotted by the vast majority of Arab states. As Ereikat puts it: "The Israelis offered nothing and therefore they should get nothing in return".

However, the Palestinians are complaining that "there is not enough Arab consensus at this stage". Palestinian sources disclosed that at last Sunday's meeting of Egyptian, Jordanian and Palestinian leaders in Cairo "there were obvious disagreements, particularly on issues related to future economic cooperation".

"We think that we have to have an Arab summit to review the situation and reconsider the future of relations in the region; we need to have an Arab consensus on this," stated Ereikat.

Egyptian and Palestinian officials argue that Albright must work on lifting the Israeli blockade of the Palestinian territories, if she wishes to maintain Arab faith in the peace process.

In Moussa's words: "We wanted this century to witness the final settlement between Arabs and Israelis. We wanted 1 January 2000 to come and see that cooperation has started. But let there be no mistake that what we are seeking is first and foremost a just and comprehensive peace."

Documenting Israeli war crimes

A report issued by the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights documents the torture and killing of Egyptian POWs at the hands of Israelis during the 1956 and 1967 wars. **Dina Ezzat** reports

The Israeli army committed many unpunished atrocities against captured Egyptian soldiers and civilians during the 1956 and 1967 wars and should be forced to pay the price, says an Egyptian human rights organisation.

Stories of horror, killings, physical abuse and psychological torture of Egyptian soldiers taken as prisoners of war by the Israeli army during the two wars were documented in a 193-page report released on Sunday by the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR).

"I was taken hostage with my entire brigade [about 90 soldiers] during the 1967 war. And no matter how much I say, I could never describe the scope of the brutality to which we were subjected at the hands of the Israelis," said Amin Mohamed. Addressing a news conference organised by the EOHR, Mohamed recalled, "We were put together in the bare desert. It was very hot. As we started to feel thirsty, they poured water around us but would not let us drink one sip. Those who complained were shot dead."

After hours of suffering from thirst and the heat, Mohamed recounted, the surviving POWs were further humiliated by having to watch Israeli soldiers inscribe the backs of their colleagues with identity information. Then, they were "put on a truck that went through crowded streets where Israelis standing by threw broken glass at us." Upon their arrival at a prisoners' camp, the POWs were "forced to walk barefoot on thorns and hear horrible stories about our country in order to demoralise us."

Entitled "Crime and Punishment", the report relates several stories similar to Mohamed's. It also documents the abuse of civilians by the Israelis in Egyptian cities that were the scene of fighting during the two wars.

Physician Ahmed Shawqi was one of the civilians taken hostage by the Israeli army in the Gaza strip during the 1956 war. "They would gather civilian hostages and force us to dig our own graves. Then they would start to insult us and selectively shoot at some of us," he recounted. According to Shawqi, scores of civilians ended up in these graves.

It took the EOHR about 18 months to put the report together. "We wanted to do a substantiated job. We needed time to find and talk to the POWs and civilians who were taken prisoner by the Israelis during those wars," said Mohamed Mounib, secretary-general of the EOHR.

In August 1995, Israeli officer Ary Biro confessed, supported with facts and figures, to the Israeli newspaper *Maariv* that he and other Israeli officers had carried out the collective massacre of Egyptian POWs during the wars of 1956 and 1967. According to his confessions, Biro and Mordechai Brown, another former Israeli army officer, ordered their units to kill about 49 unarmed POWs in Sinai, during the 1956 war, and hundreds of POWs and civilians during the 1967 war.

"In the face of the grossness of the confessions, which revealed grave human rights violations and a blatant disregard of international treaties and, in particular, of International Humanitarian Law of 1949 on the treatment of prisoners of wars and civilians during wars, the EOHR took up the issue and initiated a campaign," stated Mounib.

The campaign included promoting media and public awareness of the issue, contacting concerned officials, lobbying other non-governmental groups and finally releasing the report. The report demands that the Egyptian government seek international arbitration in order to gain compensation for the POWs or their heirs as well as a public apology from the Israeli government for the atrocities committed by its soldiers.

Moreover, "Crime and Punishment" provides first-person accounts compiled from various sources, including the Israeli press, by some of the Israeli officers responsible for the brutal treatment of Egyptians. According to one such testimony, the Israeli soldiers "were like a hurricane that destroys anything in its path. I confess that during these moments we did not think, not once, to stop and think about prisoner-taking as much as we chased Egyptians with our machine-guns without considering any rules," an Israeli officer admitted.

In the testimonies provided by the report, the Israeli soldiers also admitted that in cases of selective killing of POWs, they tended to exterminate the educated and healthy-looking Egyptians first. Perhaps the most disturbing confession was that of an Israeli businessman based in Paris who said that the organs of Egyptian POWs were provided as transplants for sick Israelis or were sold to interested individuals of other nationalities.

He said that, because he suffered from a serious kidney disease, he was advised by one of his doctors to go to Israel where he was told not to worry because "anything you need is available from the Egyptian POWs. All you need is to take a doctor to examine a number of them and find one who suits you best. Then you take him and take his two kidneys if you want."

Basically, argue the researchers who compiled the report, the crime is well-proven and it is high time to hold the Israelis accountable and make them pay for what they did. Indeed, the report provides ample legal evidence that, according to both national and international laws, Israel cannot get away with what it did.

"The EOHR calls upon the Egyptian government to take all necessary measures in order to apply Article 129 of the Third Geneva Convention, which states that the signatory parties pledge to enact any necessary legislation to impose effective punishment on those who commit or order serious violations of the Convention," the report states. It also underlines that, according to the convention, "every party is obliged to search for the persons accused of such serious violations and bring them to justice regardless of their nationality, and that these persons must be submitted to the jurisdiction of a third signatory party to be tried, provided that this party has sufficient evidence against them." Commented Mounib, "and this is what we have been doing and what we intend to keep on doing: provide necessary and sufficient evidence on these crimes."

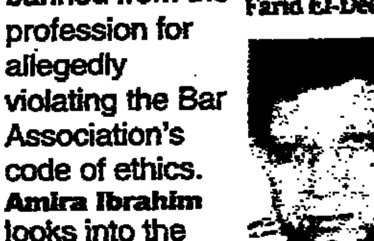
Addressing the news conference, Mounib said that the EOHR is currently addressing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the matter. He added, "I don't think that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would hesitate to show positive and quick response to our request."

Sources at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the issue of the treatment of Egyptian POWs and civilians has been on Egypt's agenda and was raised a few times in high meetings with the Israelis. According to the sources, the ministry is paying due attention to the matter but does not want to turn it into a politically sensational issue.

Azam's lawyer may be disbarred

The defence attorney of convicted Israeli spy Azam Azam could be banned from the profession for allegedly violating the Bar Association's code of ethics. **Amira Ibrahim** looks into the case





Farid El-Deeb



Murtada Mansour

Farid El-Deeb, the lawyer who defended convicted Israeli spy Azam Azam, has been referred to a disciplinary board of the Bar Association for allegedly revealing to the press information about his client in violation of the Association's code of ethics. El-Deeb is also accused of insulting the Egyptian people.

Abdel-Aziz Mohamed, head of the Association's Cairo branch, told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the Association's code prohibits lawyers from making statements about their clients outside the courtroom. He explained that El-Deeb spoke about his client to the local press as well as the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronot*.

"Lawyers should carry out their duties within the bounds of the Association's code. They should not be used as a mouthpiece for their clients or against the other party," Mohamed said.

Three lawyers complained to the Association about the alleged insults El-Deeb directed to the Egyptian people and demanded an investigation. One of the three, Murtada Mansour said El-Deeb quarreled with lawyers and journalists because they criticised him for defending the Israeli spy, describing them, as well as the Egyptian people, as "dogs". "We demanded that El-Deeb face a disciplinary board for the insults he directed to the Egyptian people and not for defending an Israeli spy," Mansour told the *Weekly*. "He is free to defend the Israeli spy but not at the expense of his people and country."

Mansour had led a group of lawyers in a demonstration at the courtroom to protest El-Deeb's decision to defend Azam. "El-Deeb was introduced on Israeli television as a representative of the Egyptian lawyers who were alleged to sympathise with the Israeli spy," Mansour said. "This is nonsense. I wanted to make it clear that El-Deeb represented himself alone and that Egyptian lawyers were, and still are, opposed to [the] normalisation" of relations with Israel.

El-Deeb had counter-argued at the time that Mansour was upset because Azam's family had considered hiring him but chose El-Deeb instead.

An investigation committee was formed at the Bar Association to look into the statements attributed to El-Deeb by the local press in which he reputedly claimed that the case against Azam was fabricated by security authorities. "When we confronted El-Deeb with these statements, he did not deny them and could not defend himself," Mohamed said. Moreover, 15 lawyers testified before the committee that El-Deeb had called other lawyers "dogs" at the courtroom.

After the investigation was completed, El-Deeb was referred to a disciplinary board. If he is found guilty, he will be suspended from the profession, either temporarily or forever.

A decision was delayed until the end of Azam's trial. "We waited until the trial was over so that El-Deeb and his supporters may not claim that the Association's action had a negative impact on the case of the spy," Mohamed said.

Azam was sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment last week, plunging Egyptian-Israeli relations to their lowest ebb since the two countries signed a peace treaty in 1979. Throughout the trial, President Hosni Mubarak rejected repeated requests by Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to release Azam, insisting that the matter was in the hands of the judiciary. After the conviction, Netanyahu sent Mubarak a letter to be passed on to Azam. Mubarak sent the letter back to Netanyahu and said that it should be sent through the appropriate diplomatic channels.

Statements by Netanyahu casting doubts on the Egyptian judicial system drew an angry reaction from the Arab Lawyers Union, which declared support for the Egyptian judiciary and condemned the "illegal acts" of the Israeli government.

Ruling on Sunday in Saudi paper libel case

A Cairo court will hand down sentences on Sunday against six Egyptian and Saudi journalists charged with slandering the two sons of President Mubarak. **Khaled Dawoud** reports



photo: Abdel-Wahab El-Seheiti

Following a heated sitting that lasted nearly five hours, the Abdin Misdemeanours Court decided to hand down its sentences this coming Sunday against six Egyptian and Saudi journalists working for the London-based *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* newspaper and its sister publication, *Al-Jadida* magazine, who were named in a libel lawsuit brought by President Hosni Mubarak's two sons, Alaa and Gamal.

The Saudi publishers of the newspaper, Hisham and Mohamed Ali Hafez, and the magazine's Saudi chief editor, Othman Al-Omayer, along with two-London based Egyptian editors, are standing trial in absentia. The only defendant present at the court hearings was Sayed Abdel-Ati, a journalist working for the local opposition daily *Al-Wafd*. All six were allegedly involved in publishing an article in *Al-Jadida* in May claiming that Alaa and Gamal had abused their influence to gain lucrative business deals.

On the eve of the magazine's appearance, *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* ran a full-page advertisement about its contents under the headline "the deals and commissions of Alaa and Gamal Mubarak." The advertisement listed the deals in which the president's two sons were allegedly involved.

Although *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* ran another full-page advertisement the following day announcing that *Al-Jadida*'s appearance would be delayed for 24 hours and apologising to the president's two sons "for the inaccurate information" contained in the earlier advertisement, Alaa and Gamal filed a libel lawsuit against the newspaper and the magazine, deeming a mere apology insufficient to repair the damage done to their reputation.

In the court's third sitting on Sunday since hearings began in July, state prosecutor Amr Marwan spoke for more than two hours to explain how all six defendants were involved in publishing the article and the advertisement. *Al-Wafd* reporter, Sayed Abdel-Ati, had tried throughout to distance himself from the other defendants, claiming that many alterations were introduced to his original article. But Marwan insisted that Abdel-Ati was fully aware of what happened to his article and approved it. He added that even the original article included libel and slander of the president's two sons.

Abdel-Ati, who was accompanied by several journalists and a lawyer representing the Press Syndicate, had filed his own lawsuit with the same court against the five other defendants, claiming that they damaged his reputation by the changes they introduced to his article. But Marwan argued that this was a trick by Abdel-Ati to dodge a court sentence.

The prosecutor also insisted that the two Hafez brothers, despite their senior positions as publishers, were directly involved in running the day-to-day affairs of the newspaper and the magazine, particularly when it came to publishing a full-page advertisement that concerned the sons of an influential Arab leader. Marwan said the article was commissioned by the Hafez brothers and Omayer and that their instructions were conveyed to Abdel-Ati by the two London-based Egyptian editors, Fawziya Salama and Gamal Ismail.

Internal memos exchanged by the editors of *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, in which Salama and Ismail admitted they were involved in editing the article and making changes to make it more sensational, were presented to the court by the prosecutor in an earlier sitting. Ismail also admitted in one of the memos that he was responsible for the wording of the advertisement which was published in *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*.

Since the newspaper has a larger circulation than its sister publication, *Al-Jadida*, publishing the advertisement by itself, with its big headlines and sensational language, was enough reason to file the lawsuit against the six defendants, Marwan said, playing down the importance of the fact that the article on the president's sons was later removed from *Al-Jadida*. Both Salama and Ismail lost their jobs with *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*.

Since the trial opened, lawyers of the Saudi publishers and the two Egyptian editors have argued that the Cairo court had no jurisdiction to hear the case because *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* is based outside Egypt. But Marwan rejected this argument on the grounds that Egyptian law stipulates that if a crime is committed, partly inside Egypt and partly outside it, the Egyptian judiciary had the authority to conduct hearings.

At the opening of Sunday's sitting, Ismail's lawyer, Farid Abdel-Karim, announced his withdrawal from the case, claiming that his client was not informed of the charges through proper legal procedures. Abdel-Karim said Ismail had only learned of the charges through newspapers. But Marwan said the fact that Abdel-Karim was hired by Ismail and that he was in court to represent him was enough evidence that the defendant was informed of the charges through a letter to the newspaper.

Prominent lawyers hired by the Saudi publishers insisted that they were not given time to study the case and prepare their defence. In a last attempt to postpone the hearings, they submitted a request to take the case to another court. But their attempt failed as they did not have authorisation from their clients to do so, which is required by Egyptian law. Consequently, they announced their withdrawal from the case, claiming that the judge rushed hearings because they involved the president's two sons.

Publishers of the Saudi newspaper announced support for their lawyers, declaring they would not appeal the verdicts even if they were convicted.

Ibrahim Kanaan, a lawyer for the Hafez brothers who flew from London to Cairo for every court sitting, denied in an earlier interview with *Al-Ahram Weekly* that his clients were responsible for publishing the advertisement or the article. "They are publishers and owners, and they did not see or approve any of this material," he said.

Closing the ceasefire file?

As more terrorist attacks were launched in southern Egypt, Interior Minister El-Alfi said the government has no plans to hold dialogue with the underground Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya

Ending all speculation concerning the government's response to the end-the-violence call by the jailed leaders of Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya, Interior Minister Hassan El-Alfi ruled out on Sunday the possibility of dialogue with the illegal group, reports **Khaled Dawoud.**

Following a visit to the Police Academy, El-Alfi told reporters that any dialogue with a "terrorist group" is out of the question. Dialogue, he added, takes place only between two states or equal partners, not between the government and an illegal group which uses violence to achieve political goals.

"If any one wants to stop [violence], he has to stop immediately without any conditions. As far as we are concerned, we will continue to use the full force of the law against those who breach it," El-Alfi told reporters.

On 5 July, one of 97 Gama'a militants standing military trial read out a statement that he said was from six "historic" leaders of the group who are serving life terms for their involvement in the assassination of the late President Anwar El-Sadat in 1981. The leaders called upon their followers to stop unilaterally all anti-government attacks inside and outside Egypt. The call, however, was greeted with suspicion, and many analysts believe it was an attempt by Islamist lawyers to influence the course of the trial and solicit leniency for the defendants.

Expatriate *Gama'a* leaders, believed to be responsible for ordering and financing the armed attacks by followers at home, opposed the cease-fire initiative, suspecting that it was made under government pressure. They said the attacks would continue as long as the government refuses to release detained militants and continues to try them before military courts. They also said that the implementation of strict Islamic laws by the state is a condition for stopping the violence.

In the course of the trial, the same defendant reiterated the cease-fire appeal, insisting that it was issued voluntarily by the jailed leaders. Meanwhile, prominent Islamist lawyer Montasser El-Zayyat intensified his efforts to gain backing for the cease-fire initiative from more jailed leaders.

The court will issue its sentences against the 97 militants on Monday.

The confusion surrounding the government's position began after the Gama'a's spiritual leader, Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, who is serving a life term in New York for ordering the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, gave his blessing to the cease-fire initiative. Two days afterwards, El-Alfi said the government "welcomed any initiative that will maintain stability and bring more investors to Egypt." But he made it clear that the government would not tolerate any violations of the law.

Any hope that the unilaterally-declared cease-fire would hold quickly plummeted when suspected Gama'a militants continued their attacks against policemen and civilians in southern Egypt. Since the initiative was made more than two months ago, Gama'a militants were blamed for three terrorist attacks in which 11 policemen and 4 civilians were killed.

In the latest attack on Saturday, suspected militants shot dead three Coptic Christian farmers at the village of Roda in El-Minya province, accusing them of working as police informers. According to police, the attackers used axes and guns in the attack, in which two Muslim farmers were also injured.

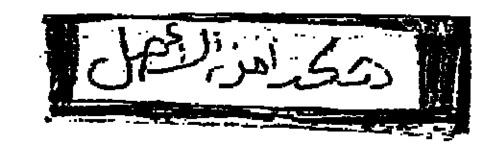
In a rare act of revenge against the families of militants, the relatives of a farmer who was injured on Saturday attacked the house of a suspected militant in a nearby village and killed his 60-year-old father, 50-year-old mother and 10-year-old sister.

In his statements on Sunday, El-Alfi confirmed that the government will never allow the formation of political parties on a religious basis "because this would threaten social stability and national unity [between Muslims and Christians] which Egypt has enjoyed over its long history."

In an implicit reference to Algeria, El-Alfi said that "the grave developments that are taking place abroad are only a result of [the government] accepting dialogue and taking such [militant] groups lightly."

The former Algerian government of President Chadli Ben Jedid agreed to conduct a dialogue with the now outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and allowed its leaders to take part in elections in early 1992. As soon as early results showed a landslide victory for the FIS, leaders of the group made it clear they would not tolerate any opposition and revealed plans to establish a strict Islamic state in the North African country. The Algerian army intervened to cancel the results of elections and impose martial law. The FIS and other outlawed militant groups resorted to violence and more than 60,000 people have been killed over the past five years.

Edited by **Wadie Kirolos**



Weeding out investment hitches

Apathy, hostility and a lack of incentives on the part of civil servants undermines efforts to boost investments in Egypt. **Mohamed Abdel-Fattah Ragab** looks at the roots of red tape and ways of cutting through it

Firmly convinced of the need to promote investments in achieving growth and creating job opportunities, the Egyptian government has issued new laws and amended existing ones so as to minimise red tape and attract investments.

Investors are always met with warm welcome and encouragement from top government officials, who offer to solve any problems. But as soon as the project reaches the implementation phase, the investor is confronted with the complex machinery of the administrative bodies, and their inclination to complicate procedures through negative thinking.

The rigidity of the Egyptian bureaucracy can be attributed to two main reasons: the personality of civil servants and their living conditions, and the laws and regulations which they implement.

Few people, who each day have to work their way through the horrors of government offices, would pause to think of the living conditions of *government employees.*

But with inflation eating away at the income of civil servants, and the hardship and drudgery of their daily life consuming their mental energy, there undoubtedly emerges a hatred of the public, in general, and investors, in particular.

In addition, the system does not provide incentives for state employees who approach their work with a positive attitude; and when their enthusiasm results in mistakes, they are penalised. Therefore, employees quickly realise that the safest position is to maintain a negative attitude and refrain from decision-making.

Similarly, promotions are based on the number of years of service and the absence of black marks or complaints in employees' work files. The promotion structure does not take into consideration employees' good performance or their ability to take necessary decisions in the workplace.

No doubt, the laws which these government employees *are responsible for implementing do little* to improve their attitude. Despite all of the recent amendments to investment regulations, these laws and decrees imply that investors dealing with the government seek to obtain benefits to which they are not entitled or to cheat the state out of its dues.

Moreover, the laws imply that officials enforcing the regulations lack integrity and are untrustworthy and, as a result, the approval for a project must be secured from various officials in different government offices.

In general, most of these laws and regulations were enacted several years ago under different economic conditions, and came at a time when a state-run economy limited the activities of the private sector.

This has essentially served to undermine the government's bid to attract investors. There is no shortage of examples of investors, both foreign and local, who have been chased away from the country by uncooperative government employees and complicated laws.

Therefore, quick and radical solutions are needed, if Egypt is to attract the investments which are needed to move the economy forward.

First, continuous training and awareness programmes must be designed for employees in offices dealing with investors, with the focus being on convincing them that they are responsible for the achievement of government objectives.

It is also essential to devise a remunerative incentives system that would reward proficient and committed officials who safeguard the interests of the general public and investors. Such incentives must represent a substantial pay increase for employees, bringing their salaries in line with the cost of living.

The money for these incentives should come from fees levied on those seeking government services. Investors will wholeheartedly welcome the extra charge compared to the valuable time they now lose chasing after their paperwork.

Another reform would be to group all the authorities responsible for issuing licenses or approvals for investment projects in one place under one leadership to save investors time and efforts.

Regulations and procedures involved in dealings between the government and the public need to be simplified, and should aim at building investors' confidence by treating them on the *basis of mutual* trust.

Egyptian courts have been overwhelmed with cases involving red tape. Rather than resorting to litigation, these problems should be sorted out on a local level. Committees of individuals renowned for their integrity and broadmindedness should be set up in each governorate and should be empowered to make decisions and resolve the problems confronting people dealing with government offices.

The writer is chairman of the Alexandria Businessmen's Association.

Private companies go public

An increasing number of privately-held companies are *seeking new ways of* expanding their ownership base using the stock market. **Niveen Wahish** reports

Signalling the emergence of a new trend on the Egyptian capital market, a number of privately-held companies have begun to widen their ownership base over the past eight months. To date, five of these companies have begun to offer some of their shares for sale, either to the public or to other private investors. Their offerings, without exception, have been *met with tremendous demand.*

The latest of these companies to put its shares on offer was the Olympic Group Financial Investment Company (OGFI). OGFI, which is the first private holding company to put its shares for sale to a spectrum of foreign and local investors, sold 7.5 million out of a total 27.5 million shares through a private placement offering. With the offering nine times oversubscribed, 60 per cent of the shares went to foreign investors and 40 per cent to local investors.

Private placement offerings are an alternative to public offerings. By selling shares through private placement, the company targets certain potential buyers it would like to have as partners. The company also retains the right to refuse *purchaser requests.*

According to a source in the Commercial International Investment Company (CIIC), the company which was in charge of marketing the OGFI offering, the revenue was intended to finance a capital increase for the company, make new investments and settle some outstanding loans.

An affiliate of OGFI, Cairo Precision Industries (CPI) was the first of these five *companies to go public.* CPI, in early January 1997, increased its capital by selling 300,000 shares — 20 per cent of its paid-in capital. Its offering was 11-times oversubscribed.

Also among the five private companies to float shares was the Oriental Weavers Company, which put up for sale 2.5 million shares — 18 per cent of the company's total share holdings. The sale increase the company's capital a staggering LE125 million, bringing its capital to LE135 million — the amount needed to finance a planned expansion project.

The International Foods Company (Hostess) took a similar step, floating 15.5 per cent of its shares to bring its capital up from *LE15 million to* LE16.7 million. El-Arabiya International Company also increased its capital by floating 43 per cent of its shares.

Private placement, used by all five of these companies, is useful not only for increasing a company's capital but also to target other investors who will add to the company's reputation on the local market, the CIIC source said.

A company may also target a foreign investor *in order to expand its operation* into the international market.

"Foreign investors are usually market-makers," said the source. "They work hard to make sure that their investments are safe and growing."

Key foreign investors are needed on the Egyptian capital market which, so far, has been characterised by instability resulting from investor inexperience.

Karim Oweis of the Egyptian Financial Group (EFG-Hermes), the brokerage company which handled the flotation of three of the five companies, said "The fact that they broaden their ownership base is, in itself, an addition to the company."

Oweis explained that the revenue accrued from the offerings are often used to upgrade and expand the company through the purchase of state-of-the-art technology, employ new workers and raise productivity.

No investors would buy shares of a company in Egypt unless its shares are traded, or at least, listed on the stock exchange, said Oweis, explaining the importance of the *step* taken by the five companies.

A company is usually listed in preparation for being traded on the market, he said. Investors make sure that the shares of the company they are about to invest in are tradable because this not only allows for the ability to liquidate their holding at any time, but also *to ensure that they receive the real value of* their shares holdings, Oweis explained.

Although it is understood that companies are listed on the market as a precursor to actually being traded, until recently this was not actually practiced. Many privately-held companies were listed on the exchange, but their shares were to be traded at a much later date. To resolve this problem, Economy Minister Youssef Boutros-Ghali recently announced that the market listing of companies whose shares have not been traded for six months would be cancelled.



The paper wars are taking their toll on local industry

Dam overhaul

New dams are being built to *improve irrigation in Upper* Egypt, writes **Niveen El-Aref**

A new irrigation project has been launched by the Ministry of Public Works and Water Resources (MPWWR), in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

The project to build three new dams along the Bahr Youssef Canal in Upper Egypt is *the first phase of the* Bahr Youssef Development project, which seeks to increase Egypt's total agricultural area. The dams replace three old structures, two of which will be demolished. The overall project will provide much needed irrigation water to Fayoum, Giza and Beni Suef.

According to Nabil Nashed, head of the MPWWR's Irrigation Improvement Sector, the implementation of the Bahr Youssef development project will finally put an end to *the dire irrigation problems in agricultural* areas which use the Bahr Youssef Canal for water.

Along with a chronic water shortage crisis, farmers in the area also had to contend with dam gates which did not open smoothly, preventing water from reaching their land, Nashed said. In other shortcomings, the gates leaked and virtually flooded the lands.

"This is one of the most important irriga*tion projects in Egypt,"* he said. "It will make the best use of irrigation water, control its distribution and prevent water loss and increase agricultural productivity by 15 per cent per feddan."

Ahmed Saleh, the JICA project coordinator, said that the project was financed both by Japan and the Egyptian government, and is being implemented in three phases.

The first phase involves the El-Lahoun group of barrages, and includes building new structures and establishing a control room for the dams. The total cost of the first phase of the project is about 2.4 billion Japanese yen (LE700,000). Japan's contribution to the project, besides the financing, has also included consultants, experts and the machinery needed to operate the dams. Egypt's main responsibility is to provide the basic infrastructural framework, such as electricity grids, and to supply labourers.

The second phase of the project will develop the Mazoura barrages, which service the Minya governorate. The third phase will be to replace the Saconla regulator which services the Assiut governorate.

"All these dams were old and virtually useless," *said Nashed.*

Confounding error

A typing error in a ministerial decree has wrong-footed the country's printers and underlined, once more, the complexity of the deregulation process, writes **Zeinab Abul-Gheit**

Paper importers are demanding a reduction of duties on printing paper from 15 per cent to 5 per cent, arguing that an incorrect announcement to that effect by the Ministry of Finance has put them in a tight spot. Printers and paper dealers say they ordered *massive amounts of paper from* abroad following last week's ministerial decree concerning the reduction of tariffs. The term "print-characters" was mistakenly printed as "paper" in the decree, causing the confusion. The Federation of Egyptian Industries' Paper and Printing Division has sent a memorandum to Prime Minister Kamal El-*Ganzouri saying that only after* the purchases have been made the typing error was discovered. If the tax reduction is not applied, they contend, their losses will be enormous.

Paper importers maintain that the existing 15-per cent duties on paper inflate the cost of printing and, consequently; the price of books and other publications, hampering the country's bid to regain its status as a publishing haven, which it lost to Lebanon in the '60s.

Publishers want cheap and good paper and are just happy to buy it no matter where. "Protecting the local paper industry is bad news for the printing and publishing world," says Mohamed El-Moallem, owner of El-Shorouk Publishing House.

El-Moallem complains of the high customs levied on quality imported paper used for chil*dren's books, encyclopedias and* reference material. The government, he says, should improve the efficiency of local paper manufacturers by reducing duties on raw materials used by the paper industry and speeding up privatisation. The high cost of printing encourages violations of copyrights, he adds.

According to statistics supplied by Rakta, the government-run paper manufacturer, Egypt consumes 600,000 tons of paper annually, three times as much as *it produces.*

Ahmed Atef, head of the Chamber of Printing and Bookbinding, accuses local manufacturers of producing low-quality paper at prices 10 per cent higher than imported paper.

A ton of locally manufactured paper sells at LE3,400 compared to LE 2,900 for the imported. The local paper contains under 20 per cent *pulp* (the rest is rice straw) compared to 70 per cent in quality paper, Atef says.

Importers complain of unfair treatment concerning quality regulations. They claim that locally manufactured paper is not subject to the same rigorous standards as the imported. But, Sayed Abul Komsan, head of the Foreign Trade Department at the Ministry of Trade and Supply, says that unless these regulations are in force importers *will be tempted to import low-*grade paper in the hope of maximising their profits. "We do not protect bad industry, whether local or foreign," he said.

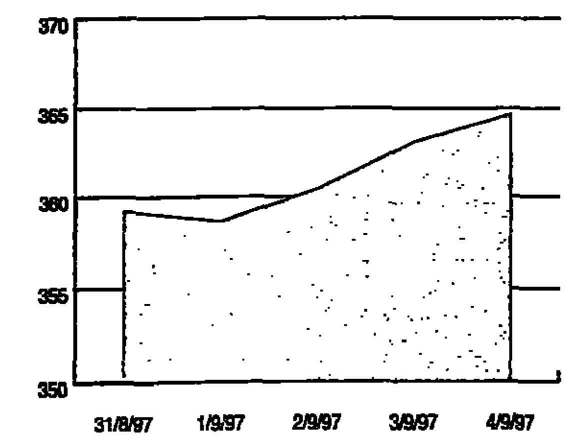
Manufacturers deny that local paper is of low standard. Rakta Chairman Mohamed El-Malki says that the quality of local paper is checked by the Standardisation Authority. He claims *that demand on local paper is* dipping because imported paper is cheaper. Exporters from Russia, India and China, he claims, dump paper at lower-than-cost prices to get a foothold in the local market.

Rédacteur en Chef Exécutif
Mohamed Salmawy

Président et Rédacteur en Chef
Ibrahim Nafie

Market report

Bonds climb for second week



THE GENERAL Market Index continued on its two-month long climb, gaining 3.11 points to close at 361.54 points for the week ending 4 September. Total market turnover leveled off at LE241.8 million.

Suez Cement was the market's leader, leading the pack in terms of value and number of shares traded over the week. *Trading in the company's stock accounted for* 10.79 per cent of total market activity as LE29.3 million in stock changed hands. The shares closed at LE73.4 after registering an LE2.24 gain.

For the second consecutive week, trading in bonds increased, with Treasury bonds 2003 recording an eight per cent increase in yield to close at LE1080.

Shares of the New Products Packaging Company suffered the greatest decrease in value, losing 14.47 per cent of their opening value before leveling off at LE30.8.

In all, the share value of 63 companies increased, 46 decreased and 31 remained unchanged.

Edited by **Ghada Ragab**

New boss

ABDEL-Moneim Seoudi was appointed as the new chairman of the Federation of Egyptian Industries last week. Seoudi, Chairman of Suzuki Egypt, replaces Mohamed Farid Khamis, Chairman of Oriental Weavers Group. Seoudi is also currently chairman of the Sixth of October Investors' Association. Khamis has chaired the federation since 1992.

Mass privatisation plans

THE HOLDING Company for Cinema, Housing and Tourism (HCHT) announced that it will divest LE5 billion of its interests in its subsidiaries by 1999, said the company's chairman, Mustafa Eid.

The assets to be privatised include hotels, floating hotels and restaurants, projects under construction, tourist villages and plots of land.

Addressing participants in a conference organised by Arthur Andersen, a US consulting company awarded the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) *contract as Egypt's privatisation consultant, Eid stressed* that there are no restrictions concerning the nationalities of the buyers.

There are, however, certain conditions covering the sale of hotels of historical value, he said. Buyers are not allowed to change the facades and architectural style of such hotels.

HCHT has already sold one of its subsidiaries, Al-Ahram Beverages Company, to the American Luxor group.

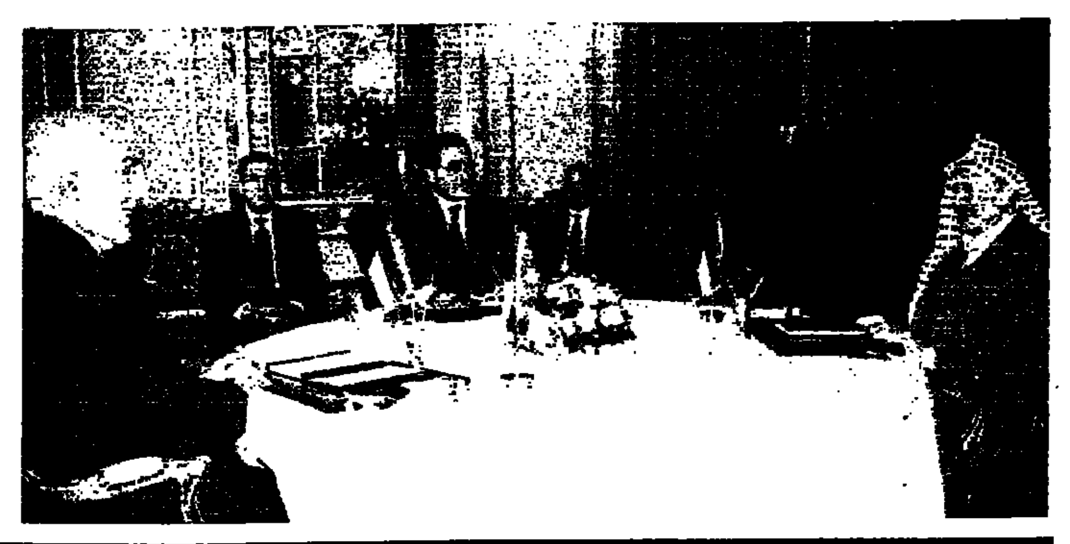
Belgian meat banned

THE MINISTRY of *Supply and Internal and External Trade* recently issued a decree banning Egyptian importers from dealing with a Belgian company because it tried to falsify documents to prove that it was not infected with mad cow disease.

Despite the ban on imported meat of Belgian origin, imposed by a ministerial decree on 2 July, a Belgian company called Verbist tried to get a shipment of 572 tons through Egyptian customs last July, claiming that it was shipped to Egypt a day before the ban came into effect.

Few weeks ago, the ministry banned Egyptian companies from dealing with another two Belgian companies, Tragex gel and Lefebvre, in addition to two French companies, Socopa and Agritrade.

Message to Albright



Cairo made ready for Albright's first visit to the region by hosting a three-way summit to spell out the Arab position. **Nevine Khalil** reports

For nearly three hours, President Hosni Mubarak, Jordan's King Hussein and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat met in Cairo on Sunday to discuss the stalled Middle East peace process in advance of US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's tour of the region which began yesterday.

The summit came at the climax of wide-scale consultations and discussions among Arab leaders aimed at averting the total collapse of the peace effort. Upon returning to Gaza, Arafat said the summit sent "a clear message" on the Arab position to Albright and all parties in the Middle East. Faisal Al-Husseini, the Palestinian Authority's official in charge of the Jerusalem portfolio, said that coordination between Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians "is very important and necessary at this critical stage". Egypt and Jordan are the only Arab countries to have signed peace treaties with Israel. The Palestinians and Israel are bound by the Oslo interim accords.

In a joint communiqué, the three leaders expressed hope for the success of Albright's tour and outlined five "concrete and specific" steps for reviving the peace process. These include that all parties should work for a "just and comprehensive peace on all tracks in the shortest time possible" and refrain from "laying down new conditions or taking positions that are in contradiction to the course of peace." Second, abstention from violent and terrorist acts, which the three leaders condemned and described as "an attempt by a small faction on the Arab and Israeli sides to obstruct the peace process". Third, the thorough implementation of signed agreements and abstention "from threatening to violate commitments" included in these agreements. In this context the three leaders emphasised the necessity for Israeli troops to redeploy in the West Bank according to schedule. The second phase of this redeployment was due to start on 7 September, the day the summit took place.

According to the Hebron agreement signed in January, Israel was expected to redeploy its forces in three stages from rural areas of the West Bank beginning on 7 March. Following the first phase, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's government stated that it would pull back from only seven per cent of the rural areas and, after the recent suicide bombings, Netanyahu said Israel was no longer bound by the redeployment schedule which ends in mid-1998. The Palestinians have accused Netanyahu of using the Jerusalem bombings as an excuse to avoid the handover of land, thus destroying the peace process.

The fourth step, according to Sunday's communiqué, is that all parties concerned should not take "unilateral measures or actions that contradict their commitments", namely settlement building, the confiscation of Palestinian land, the collective punishment of Palestinians and attempting to determine the legal and actual status of Jerusalem ahead of the final status talks. Israel should also refrain from taking any actions "or implementing projects that may result in altering the status of any part of Syrian territory behind the lines of 4 June 1967." This referred to Israel's announcement last month that it will build a dam on occupied Syrian land in the Golan Heights.

Finally, all parties should show commitment to the resumption of "serious and intensive negotiations" on the Palestinian track as well as the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, the communiqué stated. Palestinian-Israeli negotiations broke down when Israel began building a Jewish quarter in Arab East Jerusalem in March; the Syrian track ground to a halt 18 months ago after a series of suicide bombings.

The three leaders said the current crisis in the peace process "poses an extremely dangerous threat" to the region and requires a "concerted effort... to thwart the schemes of the forces which are opposed to peace". They also called for the "urgent" resumption of negotiations on all tracks and an intensified effort by peace players "to surmount all outstanding obstacles and emerge from the current impasse which threatens great harm to all the regional and international powers".

It is clear that the Arabs will not agree to altering or scrapping the Oslo accords which the Palestinians and Israelis signed in 1993 and 1995. But the Palestinians have signaled their readiness to begin the final status negotiations, to run parallel with the implementation of the interim steps contained in the Oslo accords. "The Oslo agreement *is* the agreement that has to be implemented," Foreign Minister Amr Moussa told *Al-Ahram Weekly*. "It is a document which was reached through negotiations and consent of the two sides and we believe that it is essential that this agreement is respected and implemented."

The minister went on to explain that the deterioration of the peace process was not a result of the Jerusalem bombings, but was caused by Israel's policies of settlement building and delaying the redeployment. "We must be clear that the deterioration did not begin over the past few weeks," Moussa asserted. "It is the result of [Israeli] policies which led to a lack of confidence and a deterioration of the situation. The Palestinian people feel let down," he added.

Moussa brushed aside Israeli accusations that Arafat gave Hamas the green light for carrying out terrorist acts. "It is certain the Palestinian Authority and the president of the Palestinian Authority did not give the go-ahead to any violent action," he said.

Mohamed Sobeih, Palestinian representative at the Arab League, described Sunday's meeting as "a very important summit which came at a time of very difficult and complicated circumstances". He told the *Weekly* that interim and final status negotiations should proceed parallel to each other. "We will not disregard the interim talks but are ready to launch the final status negotiations simultaneously," Sobeih explained.

He said that Netanyahu "would lose the most" if he carried out his threat to reoccupy the self-rule Palestinian territories. "The international community and the US especially must put an end to this talk," Sobeih said, "because it is very dangerous and means that Netanyahu wants to end the peace process forever."

Following the summit, President Mubarak sent a strongly-worded message to Netanyahu in which he accused him of pushing the peace process "down the drain". Mubarak warned the Israeli prime minister that unless concrete progress is made in the peace process during the coming months, the Middle East may witness "a strategic shift", which will have negative ramifications for all moderate forces in the region.

A week earlier, another stinging seven-page letter from Mubarak to Netanyahu highlighted the tension in relations between the two countries. *Haaretz* reported that the letter was a response to Netanyahu's public criticism of a Cairo court ruling that found Azam Azam, an Israeli of Druze origin, guilty of spying and sentenced him to 15 years imprisonment. Netanyahu said the verdict was "twisted" and urged Mubarak to pardon Azam. In his letter, Mubarak said that "one cannot ignore 62 million Egyptian citizens. You are not the only one who has a domestic public opinion."

American plan

Albright may succeed after all, Palestinian officials told **Tarek Hassan** in Gaza

Despite the prevailing mood of pessimism, a source close to Palestinian President Yasser Arafat was hopeful that US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who began her first visit to the region yesterday, will be able to revive the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, stalled since last March.

In statements to *Al-Ahram Weekly* yesterday, the high level Palestinian source, who preferred to remain anonymous, said Albright comes to the region with a four-point plan aimed at defusing the current crisis in the peace process and getting the parties back to the negotiating table.

The plan includes:

— Initiating confidence-building measures between the two sides, such as the implementation of the interim agreements concerning the Gaza port, airport and the so-called "safe passage" linking Palestinian self-rule areas in the West Bank and Gaza;

— Restarting security coordination through daily meetings between the two sides with US participation;

— Stopping all unilateral actions affecting the issues involved in the final status talks;

— Starting the final status talks.

Concerning the redeployment of the Israeli army in the West Bank, the Palestinian source said that the US plan calls for the first and second stages of redeployment to cover 50 per cent of the area of the West Bank. Israel is already behind schedule in implementing its redeployment agreement with the Palestinian Authority (PA), and the Palestinians insist that redeployment should take place swiftly so as to be completed by no later than May 1998.

The source said, however, that the major obstacle facing the success of Albright's visit is the continued building of settlements by the Israelis, particularly in occupied Arab Jerusalem.

PA General Secretary Al-Tayyib Abdel-Rahim told the *Weekly* that the PA is committed to the five principles declared in last week's summit meeting of President Hosni Mubarak, President Arafat, and King Hussein of Jordan. The Palestinians, he noted further, expect Albright to stick to her guns on the matter of the terms of reference of the Arab-Israeli peace process, including the land-for-peace principle.

The Palestinian official also called for the release of Palestinian detainees and an end to the continuing closure of Palestinian self-rule areas.

Abdel-Rahim accused the Israelis of focusing on the security aspects of the peace talks and ignoring the political ones. Israel's insistence on ignoring fundamental political principles, he said, could place it on a collision course with Washington.

He reiterated Palestinian commitment to all the terms of the existing agreements and said that the PA will reject any ideas that contradict these agreements.

Trapped in Lebanon's web

Israel suffered heavy losses in a foiled commando raid on Friday, triggering a debate on the withdrawal from the "security zone" and raising questions on intelligence leaks. **Zeina Khodr** reports from Beirut

Hizbollah, the Amal movement, and the Lebanese Army all claimed victory after foiling an Israeli sea-borne commando raid on Friday – the deepest into Lebanon in years. Israel said 10 elite marine commandos and a military medical officer were killed and a 12th soldier was missing and believed dead in its costliest clash in Lebanon since 1985. The heavy death toll prompted an Israeli army probe into possible intelligence leaks to Hizbollah's guerrillas. A newspaper report in Beirut claimed Hizbollah's intelligence lured the elite commando unit, Flotilla 13, into a trap.

Israel's Public Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani said he suspected "something deeper" than bad luck was behind the ambush. Israeli military experts said the likelihood of Hizbollah operating a double agent or having a well-placed mole in Israel's army ranks was slim, but could not be ruled out.

Israel has lost more than 100 soldiers in Lebanon this year alone, and the latest casualties have fuelled an already heated debate over the effectiveness of maintaining a "security zone" in southern Lebanon. Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, apparently under pressure, said he would pull out the troops if a multinational force or the Lebanese army were to depoly along the border. Only a few hours earlier, Netanyahu had ruled out a withdrawal before a political settlement was reached with Lebanon and Syria.

The target of the commando operation is still not clear, with each party declaring its own version of events. "We will never really know because it failed," Rola Muwaffak, a columnist in the widely-circulated *An-Nahar* newspaper wrote. Israel has remained tight-lipped and only said the commandos were there to fight "terrorist activities."

The attack occured in Insariyeh, an Amal stronghold, 30km north of the zone Israel occupies in the south and some 20km south of the city of Sidon. "Why did they choose this area so far away from the battlefield? It is not strategic for the resistance. It is an area under the control of the Lebanese Army," Muwafak added.

The Lebanese daily *As-Safir* reported that Hizbollah's intelligence had lured the commando unit to Insariyeh. "The intelligence leaked information to Israel that a high-ranking Hizbollah official would be in a house in the area and they would be able to kidnap him," the report said.

"The information given was correct since the official was there when the comandos landed. Hassan Nasrallah [Hizbollah's secretary-general] oversaw the whole operation and guerrillas were prepared to trap the commandos," the paper said.

Hizbollah's press office refused either to confirm or deny the report. Nasrallah told a press conference the commando unit was heading toward Insariyeh when they were spotted by an armed Hizbollah squad. Nasrallah said the commandos wanted to plant bombs on roads usually used by Hizbollah leaders, similar to the ones that exploded last month in the village of Kfour, killing five Hizbollah officials.

Amal officials claim that the Israeli commandos planned to kidnap or assasssinate one of its leading members, Sheikh Abdel-Amir Kabalan, the deputy head of the Higher Islamic Shi'ite Council. House Speaker and Amal leader Nabih Berri, whose guerrillas took part in the clash with the commandos, said the unit wanted to blow up Amal's headquarters in Insariyeh. Sources close to Berri later said the commandos wanted to plant explosives in a building and detonate them by remote control 48 hours later, during a meeting of Amal officials.

"Early on Friday morning," an Amal source said, "the commandos came ashore in dinghies, having disembarked from a navy ship. They headed to the village and were spotted by a resistance guerrilla squad while they were preparing the explosives. The resistance fired at them and the explosives exploded, blowing the Israelis to pieces. Israeli helicopters then bombed the area while trying to evacuate their casualties. An Israeli warplane shelled an army position in the area, wounding two Lebanese soldiers. The Israelis managed to withdraw before dawn but left behind body parts, wetsuits and weapons."

The Israeli army is conducting an inquiry into the failed operation. Chief-of-Staff Amnon Shahak has admitted that the explosives the commandos were carrying blew up when they were ambushed by guerrillas.

The missing soldier, believed to have been the commando carrying the explosives, is the first Israeli serviceman unaccounted for since Ron Arad's plane crashed in southern Lebanon in 1986. Dead or alive, he could be used as a bargaining chip in a future prisoner swap. Arad's whereabouts are still unknown. Netanyahu suggested he would consider swapping Hizbollah prisoners for the remains of the commandos.

Nasrallah said the movement was holding no Israeli prisoners. "We have body parts including four legs and half a head which we will make use of in the framework of future swaps," he said. Nasrallah said Hizbollah is ready to exchange the remains for prisoners in Israeli jails, adding that more than one party had contacted Hizbollah regarding the swap. Hizbollah guerrillas held in Israeli jails include Shiekh Abdel-Kareem Obeid and Mustapha Dirani, both abducted in south Lebanon by Israeli commandos.

Lebanese officials say that the raid violated the terms of the April ceasefire, because it targeted a civilian area far away from the border zone. The raid also resulted in the death of a woman and a child and the injury of many others. Lebanon has filed a complaint over the attack to the five-nation cease-fire monitoring group observing the April truce.

The incident has heightened the sense of disenchantment among the Israeli public concerning Israel's military presence in south Lebanon. It has also added to the urgency of the discussions US Foreign Secretary Madeleine Albright is holding in her current regional tour.

Peace or security?

Palestinians believe the success of Albright's mission will depend on her ability to strike a balance between justice for them and security for Israel. **Khaled Amayreh** writes from the West Bank

As US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright embarks on her much-heralded mission to the Middle East, Palestinian Authority (PA) officials have expressed hope that America's top diplomat will take a balanced and equitable approach to the grave crisis engulfing the peace process.

"We hope that Albright won't be carried away by Binyamin Netanyahu's tendentious over-emphasis on security issues," said Yasser Arafat's spokesman, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, on the eve of Albright's arrival in the region. "If the root causes of violence are not dealt with effectively, the crisis will only deepen in gravity and widen in scope," he added.

Earlier, chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Ereikat stressed that the success of Albright's mission "would mostly, if not solely, depend on the extent to which she makes a genuine balance between our need for justice and freedom, and the Israeli need for security."

"The two are inextricably entwined; there can be no peace without security, and no security without peace," said Ereikat, adding that "Israel can't continue to usurp our rights and have security at the same time."

Most Palestinian officials do not seem to give Albright the benefit of the doubt, given her anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian record during her tenure as US ambassador to the United Nations. On Tuesday, a high-ranking PA official told *Al-Ahram Weekly* that the Palestinian leadership did not expect the "pro-Israeli official to pressure Netanyahu and make him change his heart and mind on the central issue of Palestinian rights."

The Palestinian official added that "it would be naive on the part of the PA leadership to expect the United States under any circumstances to be an impartial and even-handed broker between Israel and the Palestinians, unless it is forced to do so."

As to what would force the American administration to reconsider its oblique approach to the Palestinian problem, the official said: "A united Arab stance."

The Palestinian argument seemed to be largely justified. The bulk of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, while not overtly supportive of suicidal bomb attacks, such as the two that hit West Jerusalem in the last few weeks, do pin the blame for the escalation of violence and bloodshed almost squarely on the Israeli government's policies. A Palestinian professor at the University of Hebron told the *Weekly* that "Netanyahu was offering us either of two choices, surrender or suicide bombers." His view is shared by a growing number of Palestinians.

This state of disillusion may explain Arafat's reluctance to launch massive arrests among Hamas supporters in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In the past, Arafat carried out such arrests with little compunction, because he thought that Hamas was undermining Palestinian achievements. Unlike Netanyahu, Israel's previous prime ministers, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres, gave Arafat something, real or imaginative, to show for his peace endeavours.

Now, as Netanyahu works overtime to narrow Palestinian horizons and rob the Oslo Accords of any meaningful substance, Arafat may be justified in fearing that the Israeli prime minister is seeking to undermine the Palestine Authority, not just Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. Hence, the Palestinian leader is more determined to resist Israeli demands.

Israel's month-long closure of Palestinian population centres has reduced towns and villages to little more than ghettoes. The closure, prompted by the triple suicidal bomb attack in West Jerusalem on 4 September, put an inherently weak Palestinian economy in a precarious situation, forcing the PA to cut public spending and postpone until further notice the payment of salaries to its some 100,000 employees.

Israel hopes that its draconian measures against the Palestinians would make them turn against Hamas and blame it for incurring Israel's wrath. However, the harsh Israeli measures, often accompanied by brutal mistreatment of ordinary Palestinians at ubiquitous Israeli checkpoints and roadblocks, are likely to backfire, with the majority of Palestinian blaming Israel rather than Hamas for their hardships.

Human rights organisations in the West Bank have accused the Israeli army of sending hundreds of innocent Palestinians to detention camps in order to inflict maximum distress and pain on their families.

On Monday, the Jerusalem-based Human Rights Centre (HRC) issued a press release saying that "Israeli soldiers were using a variety of physical and psychological methods designed to inflict maximum suffering on Palestinian detainees and their families."

In numerous cases, the statement added, the arrests were carried out haphazardly, without any legitimate security justification.

The HRC cited the example of Khalil Karrat, 30, of Betunya near Ramallah. Karrat, who was released on 28 August from the Meggido detention camp, having spent 10 months there without being charged or tried, only to be detained again on 7 September.

Sharif Awawdeh, a blind Hebron University student, is another example. He was released from Meggido on 20 July after spending 16 months there, again without being charged or tried. He was re-arrested on 7 September and sent back to Meggido.

Awawdeh's cousin, Ismail, thinks he knows the answer. "They [the Israelis] seem to be telling us "look, you are hostages to us, and you had better take that into account, or else we will keep you behind bars." According to the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group, the Israeli army has arrested nearly 800 Palestinians since the 30 July bombing in West Jerusalem.

Palestinian officials say that the detainees were arrested for their ideas rather than actions. Their arrest, they charge, was unjust. But is there such a thing as justice under occupation?

Mission brutality

Demolishing Arab houses in the occupied Palestinian territories has been labelled "demographic genocide" by the Palestinians. **Khaled Amayreh** reports on the daily practice from Jerusalem



photo: Khaled Zighari

Palestinian families, whose houses had been demolished by Israel, are living in a makeshift refugee camp called "the Jerusalem camp". Israel destroyed 513 houses, 48 of which were destroyed last month alone

Demolition of Arab homes in the West Bank by the Israeli occupation authorities has become a daily affair since Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu came to power 15 months ago. The brutal practice has become so rampant that observers and human rights activists have begun to use such labels as "demographic genocide" and "house massacres" to describe its wide-spread and devastating effect on Palestinian families.

In East Jerusalem, where the established, but undeclared, Israeli policy is to throttle Arab population growth "by hook or by crook," the spectre of home demolition haunts tens of thousands of Palestinians.

On 15 August, the families recently made homeless decided to demonstrate their plight in full view of world public opinion. They created a makeshift refugee camp which they named "the Jerusalem camp." The camp, located in the Suwwana neighbourhood, now shelters more than 30 Jerusalem Arab families whose homes have been destroyed by the Israeli occupation authorities and/or whose residency rights have been withdrawn for reasons concocted by the Israeli Interior Ministry.

"The Israeli government is waging war on us, they don't want us here and they are using all kinds of cunning tactics and legal tricks to get us to leave *Al-Quds Al-Sharif* (Jerusalem)," said Ahmed Dawoud, one of the victims of the Zionist policy.

"If any country did something like this to the Jews, there would have been an outcry, but much of the world is just silent, watching Israeli authorities implement this manifestly racist policy against us," an embittered Dawoud added.

Last week, the Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights (also known as Al-Qanun) released an report on "the demographic cleansing in the West Bank and East Jerusalem."

The report points out that since the conclusion of the Oslo Accords in September 1993, Israel has demolished 513 homes, 48 of which were destroyed last month alone.

According to Khader Shukeirat, a lawyer representing Al-Qanun, the Israeli occupation authorities have demolished 421 homes in the West Bank and 92 in East Jerusalem. Of these, 268 were destroyed under the Labour government and 245 under the current Likud administration.

Azmi Bishara, an Arab Knesset member, contended that the home-demolition policy was a stark manifestation of Israeli racism. "Israel is adopting a policy of ethnic cleansing in 70 per cent of the West Bank," said Bishara in a recent Jerusalem symposium on the subject.

Bishara added that Israeli land laws and regulations are designed to facilitate the usurpation of Arab land. He described the laws as "purely political in nature," adding that the ultimate Israeli aim is to inhibit Arab demographic expansion.

As usual, the occupation authorities claim the houses were built without "proper permits" and are located on land needed for bypass roads, settlement expansion, or in the vicinity of army camps.

However, it seems clear that the real motive *behind the planned destruction of Palestinian* homes is to curtail Arab demographic growth, particularly in those parts of the West Bank where the Palestinians still have some space for future expansion.

Indeed, by stepping up this practice, the current Israeli government is in effect reverting to the ill-reputed policies of former Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who sought to "narrow Palestinian horizons so much that they would eventually be forced to leave their homeland for good."

Tactically, the demolition of Palestinians' homes aims primarily to inflict maximum emotional distress and pain on Arab families. In addition to the building-without-permit excuse, the Israeli army routinely resorts to the practice when a member of a Palestinian family is involved, in fact or merely by suspicion, in acts of resistance against the occupation. In some cases, throwing a stone at a passing Israeli military vehicle would be considered as sufficient grounds for demolishing the perpetrator's home.

House demolition is a particularly overwhelming experience because of the symbolic status which Palestinians attach to their homes. To express extreme condemnation in Arabic, Palestinians say *yikhrib beitak* — may your home be destroyed.

Clearly, the Israeli occupation authorities have understood this "weak point" in the Palestinian psyche and spared no effort in utilising it to the full. Since the end of the 1967 war, when the policy of destroying Arab homes was adopted, thousands of homes have been demolished, leaving indelible scars on the affected families.

Unmoved by Palestinian suffering, the Israeli army has introduced stringent restrictions on the rebuilding of destroyed homes. As a result of the Oslo process, the situation became particularly difficult for Palestinians living outside the boundaries of area "A" in the West Bank. This area *comprises towns and villages administrated* by Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority, covering a mere 2.5 per cent of the West Bank.

Faced with the prospect of homelessness, many Palestinians, especially young couples who have nowhere to live, often venture to build a home without obtaining the precious building permit beforehand. Many take the risk of building without a permit because they are extremely difficult to obtain.

The manner in which a house is demolished is telling in itself. The operation often begins by declaring the place where the doomed house is located a closed military zone. Then, after soldiers have taken up their positions around the house, an officer would approach the head of family to inform him that he has two hours to get all the family's belongings and furniture out. Distraught family members would then rush to get some of their valuables out. A crying wife would beg an apathetic army officer to spare the home. But all pleas are to no avail, because "we are only following orders," as the army officer would respond.

As the deadline approaches, all hope of saving the home fades. A child, returning from school and not knowing what is going on, would make a last dash into the home before it becomes a pile of debris, hoping to salvage a favourite toy or story-book. Then the deadline would expire. The commanding officer would order the family to step back. Soon afterwards, explosives would be planted and detonated. The home would be reduced to rubble — "mission brutality" accomplished.

Ankara downplays cooperation with Israel

Officials downplayed the importance of the joint naval manoeuvres Turkey will soon hold with Israel and the US following the outraged reaction of the Arab world, reports **Omayma Abdel-Latif**

When Turkish President Suleyman Demirel embarks on his expected one-day visit to Cairo next week, he will be confronted with Egypt's displeasure at his country's growing military alliance with Israel. Egypt's dismay mirrors the feelings of anger that are running high in the Arab world since Turkish officials announced late last month their plan to conduct joint naval manoeuvres with Israel and the US in the eastern Mediterranean in mid-November.

The issue is expected to dominate the talks between President Demirel and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak who has repeatedly expressed his concern that these manoeuvres will worsen the already tense situation in the region.

Foreign Minister Amr Moussa stated last week that the manoeuvres were "a negative message and a negative step towards the Arab countries."

The manoeuvres which will emphasise joint search-and-rescue naval exercises, according to Turkish officials, were to be held in August but were postponed due to strong pressure from both Egypt and Syria. Last week, an Israeli diplomat said that the exercises will be held in November.

Turkey and Israel signed a framework for agreement on military cooperation in February 1996. Although its exact contents are still confidential, it is known that the agreement generally consists of protocols regarding an exchange of visits by military delegations, naval port calls, access to training areas, joint air and naval training, cooperation in the areas of counter-terrorism and border security and joint military production. In addition, Israel and Turkey are believed to have strengthened their long-standing intelligence ties.

Both Iranian and Syrian officials have strongly denounced the Israel-US-Turkey war games. "Iran considers Turkey a member of the Islamic community and therefore rejects its cooperation with the Zionist regime that poses a threat to the interests of Muslims in the region," Iran's new Foreign Minister Kemal Kharazi was quoted as saying last week. Earlier this week, Demirel sent a Turkish envoy to Iran to call for the need to establish closer bilateral ties. Syria expressed its opposition to the war games by saying that Turkey "never should have established ties with Israel through military agreements."

Turkey, in an effort to soothe the anger of its Arab neighbours, has repeatedly stated that the exercises were for search-and-rescue operations only and not directed against any country.

In their bid to lessen the wrath of the Arab world, Turkish officials speaking to *Al-Ahram Weekly*, downplayed the impact of the manoeuvres on Turkish-Arab relations. One Foreign Ministry official emphasised that the manoeuvres were not in any way directed against the Arabs. "There is not much substance to the forthcoming joint manoeuvres with Israel. There is more of a political message in these manoeuvres and less of a show of force against the Arab world," Ambassador Ayden Alagakaptan, a former Turkish ambassador to Syria, told the *Weekly*.

Alagakaptan admitted, however, that the Israeli-Turkish military cooperation is a response to the Syrian-Greek military relations but he dismissed that the war games were targeting Syria. "Why would we have to fight with Syria? There is no logical purpose for that. But with Greece, there is always a potential for a conflict to arise any time," Alagakaptan said.

"Israel has an advanced arms industry and Turkey needs military hardware and since the US has imposed an embargo on military supplies to Turkey, we were told that Israel was our final resort," he explained.

Earlier this month, a military strategic analysis report issued by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy detailed the possible repercussions of the military cooperation agreements signed between the two countries in February and August 1996. The report revealed that the Turkish-Israeli military cooperation "may enable Israeli jets to launch strikes against Iranian non-conventional targets near Tehran, as well as create serious difficulties for Syria on land, sea and air in case of a war over the Golan Heights."

"Israel has reportedly established intelligence listening posts along the Turkish-Iranian border," said Michael Eisenstadt, a military analyst working in the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He went on to explain that the possibility that "Turkey could assist Israel in wartime is a complicating factor which Syria should consider." Eisenstadt added, "In the future, President Hafez Assad will have to face the possibility of fighting Israel in the Bekaa Valley or the Golan, while looking over his shoulder toward Turkey."

Commenting on this view, a Turkish Foreign Ministry official described it as "an unrealistic scenario of events". "The current political realities rule out the possibility that Israeli aircraft and warships could operate from Turkish territory in wartime. Turkey would gain little by openly supporting the Israeli war efforts," Ekram Esat Goyendiren, Turkey's first ambassador to Israel and head of the Turkish-Israeli economic committee, told the *Weekly*.

Commenting on the view that the manoeuvres come at a time when the peace process has reached a dead end, Goyendiren said that his country does not hold much faith in the peace process. "People in Turkey don't believe that much will come out of the peace process. Therefore, any time is a good time to carry out the manoeuvres with Israel. Turkey cannot adjust itself to some developments that may never materialise," he concluded.

Ekeus' ghost haunts successor

Despite initial optimism, recently-appointed UN Chief Weapons Inspector Richard Butler could face the same trouble his predecessor Rolf Ekeus experienced in his dealings with Bagdad, writes **Hussein Al-Qassimi**

When Richard Butler, the UN chief weapons inspector in charge of dismantling Iraq's arms programmes, visited Baghdad in July, shortly after replacing Swedish diplomat Rolf Ekeus, he confidently declared his mission a success, saying that he found "a new sense of cooperation" in Iraq.

His optimism was received with caution, if not skepticism, by observers who have been watching the bitter relationships between Baghdad and UNISCOM, the UN Special Commission monitoring the dismantling of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction which was set up after the 1991 Gulf War. UNISCOM was entrusted with the task of uncovering and destroying all Iraq's nuclear, chemical, biological and missile arsenals.

Although it was expected that the Iraqis would take advantage of Butler's appointment and make a fresh start, the question centred on how the Australian diplomat would manage to convince the Iraqis to cooperate, a task which his predecessor had found daunting.

Before the UN Security Council lifts sanctions imposed on Iraq after the 1990 invasion of Kuwait, Baghdad must get rid of all its non-conventional weapons and long range missiles.

Ekeus has always complained that Iraq was withholding information and preventing his inspectors from gaining access to some sensitive military and security sites. Iraq has denied this and charged Ekeus of being an American stooge appointed to harass Baghdad and spy on its weapons programmes.

On 10 October the Security Council will receive a report from UNISCOM on the progress of its activities and Iraq's cooperation before deciding on whether to renew the sanctions. It is this report which makes Butler's visit and his findings crucial to Iraq's efforts to get the embargo lifted.

During his first visit, Butler's message to the Iraqis was simple: "If Iraq doesn't seize (this opportunity), they'll be making a serious mistake. There is no one in the Security Council who will put up with more Iraqi delays."

Butler said he made this clear during talks with Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz, Foreign Minister Mohamed Saeed Al-Sahaf, Iraq's Ambassador to the UN Nizar Hamdoun, Oil Minister Ahmed Rashid and Amer Al-Sadi, advisor to the president.

"The time is up... It's time now to bring all this to a conclusion and I urge a renewed degree of cooperation by Iraq to make it possible," Butler said.

On Saturday, Butler arrived in Baghdad, seeking answers to the questions he submitted to Iraqi officials in July and determined to review the level of cooperation Iraq has made since that time. He met with the same Iraqi officials and assessed the situation with his aides on the ground.

The Iraqis must have realised that a positive report from Butler is crucial for next month's Security Council discussions on the sanctions. Iraq claims that the country is free of prohibited weapons. What the Iraqis told Butler and his team has not yet been divulged.

After four days of talks, Butler left Baghdad on Tuesday, seemingly less upbeat than he was during his July visit. Worrying signals came Monday night when Iraqi television quoted him as saying that "despite great achievements there are too many questions still to be answered."

Even worse, sources accompanying Butler later said that the discreet Australian diplomat is probably experiencing the same symptoms of impatience which his predecessor had developed during five years in the same capacity.

The sources contacted by *Al-Ahram Weekly* from Baghdad said that Butler warned the Iraqis during talks that unless they hand over all the documents the inspectors are seeking and stop manipulating evidence, it would be hard for him to give a positive report to the Security Council.

Before he left Baghdad, Butler told the Iraqi government that it should hand the UN a full declaration on its biological warfare programme within 48 hours. This should be "the full, final and complete declaration on Iraq's past biological programme," Butler told a press conference.

If this statement is an indication of what to come, Iraq should not expect the clean bill of health it had hoped Butler would deliver before next month's review of the sanctions.

As the October review nears, Iraq is also losing patience. It fears that the Security Council may impose tougher sanctions, as it has threatened to do if the UNISCOM report is not favourable.

In his 17 July speech marking the 29th anniversary of the revolution that brought his party to power, President Saddam Hussein warned that Iraq may no longer cooperate with the UN weapons inspectors unless the Security Council lifts all sanctions imposed on Iraq. "Iraq has fulfilled its obligations and it is unacceptable that the Security Council should fail to acknowledge the sacrifices Iraq has made. [the Security Council should] should lift the embargo completely," he said.

Observers took the warning seriously and said there could be another confrontation with the UN in October when the inspectors report again on Iraqi compliance. If this happens, we may soon see the Iraqi state media unleash against Butler the same scathing criticism it once saved for Ekeus.

Morocco democratises carefully

As Morocco prepares for general elections, **Rasha Saad** looks at the political reforms the kingdom is undergoing

The date of the future general elections in Morocco has caused much controversy. Earlier this month, King Hassan stated that they would be held no later than the beginning of November and added that a new government would take over early next year. However, Moroccan sources recently said that the elections will be postponed to an undisclosed date, but gave no explanations.

In preparation for the general elections, King Hassan reshuffled the government of Prime Minister Abdel-Latif Filali in early August. He told 20 ministers with political party affiliations, including the finance minister, to step down so that they could focus on campaigning for the elections.

The new government, made up mainly of technocrats, is therefore of a transitional nature and mainly concerned with supervising the coming general elections. However, it will also have to deal with economic and social issues before the next government takes over.

According to observers, Morocco's political scene has lately been a forum for reforms based on planned decentralisation. Since the late 1980s, the Moroccan political system has changed and witnessed many ups and downs. In the 1990s, it reached a new peak that made it "one of the Arab countries that best applied a limited political multiparty system", according to one analyst.

Under a constitutional referendum overwhelmingly approved last year, the Moroccan parliament is to be split into two houses with a directly elected lower house composed of 325 members, the Chamber of Deputies, and a 270-member upper house, the Chamber of Counsellors.

Under planned decentralisation, provincial councils will also have more money and power to push development projects to deal with the disparity between the country's rural and urban areas.

Morocco's limited democratisation steps are linked also to the North African country's desire to develop its relations with the European Union. Thus, the constitutional changes were regarded as part of a plan by the kingdom to present itself as a democratic country concerned with human rights and self-expression.

The Moroccan government has long been criticised by local and international human rights groups for human rights violations; sending opponents into exile and detaining hundreds of people for years without charges or trial. In prison, detainees are subjected to various forms of torture and maltreatment, according to human rights reports.

But following the latest general elections in 1995, in which opposition parties won more votes, they were offered some concessions by the Moroccan government, including several cabinet posts. However, the opposition parties refused to participate in the new cabinet because of the insignificant ministerial posts offered to them. Such posts would not have enabled them to play the effective political role they sought.

The announcement on the expected general elections was welcomed by the opposition groups who hope that the government will give them more privileges and consider their demands for more participation in the process of decision-making.

Reconciliation with the opposition started in mid-1995 when opposition leader Mohamed Al-Basri was freed after being detained for 30 years. More than 400 other members of the opposition arrested in 1994 were also freed at the time.

Edited by: **Khaled Dawoud**



Rescuing Dayton

Eqbal Ahmad highlights the pitfalls of Pax Americana in the Balkans generally, and in Bosnia in particular

In November 1995, when it was concluded in Dayton, Ohio, the accord on Bosnia was hailed as yet another monument to the primacy of American power in world affairs. From Henry Kissinger to Charles Kraut Hammer, the pundits again proclaimed that only the United States could lead the world into war as it did against Iraq in 1990, forge a peace as it was presumed to have done in the Middle East, and end the war in the Balkans.

True, the Dayton Accord stopped genocidal warfare in Europe that had endured for three and half years with the complicity of Western powers, including the US. It divided Bosnia formally into two parts — the ethnically cleansed Republika Sprska and the US-engineered Muslim-Croat Federation. The division is actually three-fold as the federation exists only in name. Croatia keeps an iron hold on the Croat-majority areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina and awaits an opportunity to annex these territories into greater Croatia. Moreover, the Dayton agreement envisages the partition as temporary. It provides for the return and rehabilitation of refugees, many of whom are survivors of "ethnic cleansing", the trial and punishment of individuals accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, free movement of goods and services, free elections and a set of shared institutions including a collective, tripartite Bosnian state presidency.

These provisions are intended to gradually make the federation a reality but they have been either farcically realised or remained unenforced. Momcilo Krajisnick (alias Momo) is an example of a farcical observance of the Dayton agreement. This former contractor was convicted in the mid-'80s along with Radovan Karadzic, his friend and mentor, of making a fraudulent business deal. During the Serbian ethnic cleansing campaigns of the early '90s, he was an accessory to Karadzic's crimes and thefts. When Karadzic, who is foremost among those indicted by the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, assumed the presidency of Republika Sprska, Momo became the speaker of the Bosnian Serb parliament.

Together, the two have gained notoriety, this time as the Twin Peaks of corruption in the Republika. Momo is now one of three members, along with Izzethegovich, of the Bosnian state presidency, a position he uses to undermine the Dayton Accord.

Karadzic, his retinue of collaborators and the network of police, army, media and crime syndicates he controls were from the start perceived in Washington and European capitals as the main obstacles to fulfilling the promises of Dayton. But from fear of igniting their hostility, NATO's commanders were not instructed to arrest Radovan Karadzic and his other indicted cohorts even though, under Dayton, making such arrests was part of NATO's responsibility and the tribunal in the Hague has made repeated requests that they apprehend at least those indicted individuals whose whereabouts are known.

Karadzic lives in Pale, the Serbian nationalists' capital, in an ostentatiously grand style. From there he runs the ethnically cleansed Serbian state and his many shady businesses. Like his many indicted collaborators, he moves around freely as the NATO forces look the other way. Under pressure from the NATO powers, he formally relinquished his post as president and passed it on to another protégée, Biljana Plavsic who was then his vice-president and whom he expected to serve at his command. As often happens, the new president strained at the leash and at one cabinet meeting complained of lawlessness and corruption in the highest echelons of the state. Karadzic had her moved out of Pale, stripped of power and perquisites, to Banja Luka. There, she nursed her rage and sought allies. She had but one prominent ally in the government, Vice President Nikola Koljevic. He died at his desk, a bullet in his head. Dayton's frustrated authors saw in this development an opportunity to play puppet-poker getting knee-in-the-muck of extremist Serb politics.

Washington has reasons to be anxious. NATO's monitoring mandate ends in June 1998 and cannot be extended unless the US commits its troops at least to the present level, a decision which is liable to cause debate in Congress as regards the effectiveness of the Clinton administration's Balkan diplomacy. Some progress in the Bosnian "peace process" must be discernible for either the NATO troops to withdraw, or for its mandate to be extended. The latter option is the most realistic, for if NATO withdraws in mid-1998, war will surely resume in Bosnia, instantly killing Dayton.

At the end of June, Plavsic was in London, courted by the British Foreign Office. Upon her return to Bosnia, she was abducted at the airport by the Karadzic-controlled forces. As she was being taken to Pale, NATO units intervened. This rescue was a turning point. Emboldened by the promise of NATO support, Biljana Plavsic went on the offensive. On 2 July, she openly denounced the regime over which she formally presided and which Karadzic actually controls and called for the dismissal of the minister of interior, Dragan Kijaca. On 8 and 9 July, when Madeleine Albright attended the NATO summit in Madrid, it was decided to put some teeth into NATO's extravagantly prudent mandate in Bosnia. NATO, for three and a half years a neutral observer of genocide in Europe, is now a party to the internal dispute among Serb nationalists.

NATO's current operations are aimed at transforming Biljana Plavsic from a figure-head to the governing president of the rump republic. Radovan Karadzic's power is based on his control of three sectors: the Serb republic's 40,000-strong police force which serves him and his gang of extremists as a private army; a vast patronage machine in the form of the state-owned businesses and industries; and the media which he employs to whip up extreme nationalist fervour. The Karadzic group is also supported by senior army commanders. When Biljana Plavsic invited them for a meeting on 26 August, four of the eight top Bosnian Serb Generals boycotted it. NATO's strategy is to help her gradually wrest control of the police, industry and media from the men in Pale, institute reforms along the way, and use Euro-American aid to improve the lot of the impoverished country.

This is a chancy strategy, given the circumstances and also the hesitancy which NATO's divided partners are evincing in pursuing it. A case in point is that NATO units from Canada and Spain declined to participate in the operation to disarm the police in Banja Luka and Brcko. A bigger problem may arise if, despite the odds against it, this strategy does succeed. It may not bring about a Serb government willing to enforce the Dayton accord sincerely. Biljana Plavsic's political and ideological agenda is not different, after all, from that of Radovan Karadzic and other Serb leaders whom NATO is trying to cut out. Her political profile is chilling indeed.

The 67-year-old former professor of Biology at the University of Sarajevo has argued, on "scientific" grounds, that Serbs are genetically superior to Muslims. She proposed to divide Sarajevo, with the largest portion going to the Serbs. Why? Well, Muslims are used to living on top of each other while Serbs should live as human beings do. When the storm troopers of Arkan, one of the most sadistic of Serb militia leaders "cleansed" the town of Zvornic of its 25,000 Muslim inhabitants — most were tortured, raped and massacred — Madame Plavsic embraced him: "I always kiss heroes," she proclaimed. In April 1992, she ordered a convoy of 78 Muslim children to be held hostage — without food, water and blankets — until her brother, who was held a prisoner of war by Muslim forces, was released. "Ethnic cleansing", she argued, was the international community's term to describe a "natural phenomenon".

With such an ally, can the US and NATO advance the process of peace and unification in Bosnia? It is a question which no one has yet asked in the US Congress, the UN or the OIC (Organisation of the Islamic Conference) which is perhaps the most objective among the international organisations. Such are the terms of Pax Americana.







Jerry Adams

The Mir quagmire

Russia's space programme evolved under Communism. Will it wither away under capitalism? asks **Abdel-Malik Khalil** in Moscow

Russia was the first country to send cosmonauts to space, but 1997 was not a happy year for the Russian space programme. Ever since the demise of the Soviet Union, the Russian space industry has suffered severe financial, organisational and technical difficulties.

Baikonur, the world's largest rocket launching site, occupies over 7,000 square kilometres of steppe in the central Asian Republic of Kazakhstan and used to be the showpiece of the Soviet space industry. This was where Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin embarked 36 years ago on the world's first manned space flight. Today, there is a long-running dispute over whether Russia or Kazakhstan calls the shots and pays the bills. "The years 1993 and 1994 were disastrous. Sometimes there was no light and heat on the launch pads," Major Igor Golosov, 34, who has worked on the base for 12 years, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

In the past Baikonur's role as a military base was crystal clear. "Who comes to us bearing a sword shall die by the sword," reads a large inscription on a wall near the Soyuz rocket launch pad.

Now, cosmonauts like Golosov spend less time on Russian space exploration and defence contracts and carry out commercial satellite launches for foreign contractors eager to use Baikonur's relatively cheap and reliable facilities instead. Seven of at least 12 Proton launches planned for this year are commercial and that number is expected to increase next year. "[In the Soviet era], we only launched our own rockets," said Golosov angrily. "It's annoying because our job is to defend the motherland, not to do business with foreigners," Golosov added.

While 40 to 50 launches were made in Soviet times annually, only 10 to 15 are now made. Meanwhile, commercial demand shows no sign of flagging. According to American space consultant and author James Oberg, this year the Russian Space Agency budget was around $600 million. "Much of that is generated by launching contracts now under way at Baikonur," Oberg explained.

Each launch costs between $70 and $90 million, but very little trickles down to the people who work at Baikonur. As government support for Russia's space industry is minimal, survival demands making the facilities available to those who can pay well — the Soviets' former Western foes. A spokesman for Russia's Military Space Forces revealed that commercial revenues are expected to outstrip government subsidies in 1998.

For example, International Launch Services, a joint venture between Russian state-controlled aerospace firms Energiya and Khrunichev and America's Martin-Lockheed with a 51 per cent stake, is the biggest private launcher at Baikonur. "Their boosters are relatively cheap compared to French and American boosters," Oberg explained. "Basically, other commercial launchers are booked to capacity and so the Russians have an opportunity. The Chinese are trying to attract new customers but they have had some problems recently. They blew up a few. The Russians have not lost a commercial payload yet," he went on.

The town administration is watching developments closely. "Everything is now commercialised," said Gennadi Dimitrenko, the former army officer who was appointed head of the town administration in March 1995. The relations between the town and the base is quite simple. If there are space programmes, the town will be economically viable. If the programmes are cut back, the town dies.

Baikonur's staff talk openly of the deterioration that started in 1992 after the collapse of the Soviet superpower. A mass exodus of engineers and other specialists back to Russia took place and the population of the town fell to 50,000 — half the population it had a decade ago. Under Kazakh rule, the gates of this once high-security town were effectively thrown open. "Today, Baikonur is a poorly-lit and dirty town. People are afraid to go out at night because of rampant violence," Dimitrenko explained. He is determined to set Baikonur on its feet again now that the Kazakh government has leased both the town and the base until the year 2015.

The Kremlin is also embroiled in the Mir space programme's many troubles.

Mir was initially planned to last five years and is now in its 11th year. Mir is a complex of six interconnected modules, one of which, the 12-metre long Spektr, about the size of a school bus crowded with equipment, is the science module. In addition, its solar energy panels help power the entire station.

On 14 August, cosmonauts Vasily Tsibliev and Alexandre Lazutkin landed in Baikonur after a six-month flight that was marred by a fire. In February, the entire system had malfunctioned and the station filled with smoke. Mir's power supply system was damaged in June when an unmanned cargo vehicle collided with Spektr during docking. The module had to be hurriedly sealed off. "If we felt incompetent or weren't professionals, we would have returned to earth on February 23 — straight after the fire," Tsibliev told reporters in Moscow recently.

But then disaster struck. Anatoly Solovyov and Pavel Vinogradov together with NASA astronaut Michael Foale were to replace Tsibiyev and Lazutkin. They were in Soyuz preparing for the 42-minute flight when the tiny space craft disengaged from the space station. Radio and video contact was lost for almost 30 minutes as both Soyuz and Mir went out of range and there was no indication of how the flight had gone until contact was reestablished. Alarm bells were sounded and the camera came back on line only after Solovyov completed a trouble-free docking.

On 5 July, the crew told ground controllers that they could hear a thumping sound inside Spektr and reported a snow-like cloud scattering from the hull. It was decided that three Russian cosmonauts were to open up the dark, airless and depressurised Spektr and attempt to reconnect power cables. "This sort of repair has never been done before, not by Russians nor Americans," said deputy flight director Viktor Blagov.

The repair operation was scheduled for 22 August. Technicians had feared toxic chemicals, fragments of glass and metal might be floating inside the module, but cosmonauts found the equipment intact. "The reconnection of the cables went faster than we anticipated," said Valery Udaloi, first deputy director of the mission control centre. Despite the highly tense situation, the operation ended in success and the 11 cables were connected to the solar panels mounted on Spektr to supply vital electrical power to Mir.

As many as five space walks outside the station are planned for the next six months to make repairs to Spektr's damaged hull. More repairs will also be needed inside the module before any attempts to depressurise it are made.

Moscow Fest

ON FRIDAY night, traditional Russian songs and dances by artists dressed in bright red costumes kicked off the celebrations marking Moscow's 850th anniversary. Saturday witnessed an impressive parade and a spectacular laser show staged by French composer Jean-Michel Jarre. Throughout the event, the city's streets were filled with Muscovites and visitors, enjoying free concerts, spectacles and gourmet dishes prepared by chefs from all over the country.

Coming nearly six years after the break-up of the former Soviet Union, the festivities strive to gloss over communist achievements — highlighting instead the capital's distant medieval and imperial past. In that spirit, the city's powerful and popular mayor, Yuri Luzkov, unveiled a giant statue of Peter the Great by Zurab Tsereteli, the mayor's favourite sculptor. The grandiose opening ceremony featured marching naval guards, a gun salute and the consecration of the monument by Alexy II, Patriarch of Russia's Orthodox Church.

Muscovites, however, strongly criticised the oversized, 94 metre-high statue, which they feel disfigures the city centre. Many residents also feel insulted that their mayor should honour Peter the Great, a ruler who disliked Moscow for its "backwardness" to the extent that he moved the capital to St Petersburg.

In reference to Moscow's central role in dismantling the former Soviet Union, Russian President Boris Yeltsin said that "the first group of democrats sprang up here and accomplished the impossible. Together we started writing a new chapter of Russia's history." Yeltsin also praised Luzhkov, despite the fact that the latter, who is said to harbour presidential ambitions for the next elections in 2000, clearly distanced himself politically from the president. Luzhkov blasted Yeltsin's failed economic reforms, criticising Yeltsin's refusal to privatise local industries and increase individual social security checks by 25,000 rubles. Luzhkov also sang the praises of his own architectural projects which include an extension of the underground commuter line and the opening of an American-style supermarket.

While Muscovites enjoyed the gala atmosphere and the partying, many residents criticised their mayor for spending an estimated $60 million on the festivities, while the homeless roam the streets and the salaries of civil servants remain unpaid for months on end.

The Karadzic conundrum

Why do many Bosnian Serbs insist that Radovan Karadzic is a national hero, not an international criminal? Mustafa Abdallah in Vienna investigates

The battle between Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic and Radovan Karadzic, the international criminal wanted for crimes against humanity, is not yet resolved. Karadzic, who orchestrated the mass killing of thousands of Bosnian Muslims, stands accused of genocide and the international community is determined to try him. But many Bosnian Serbs see him as a national hero and view Plavsic with suspicion.

Plavsic is regarded in many circles as an American puppet and unpatriotic. The 67-year-old president is locked in a power struggle with officials loyal to Karadzic. The Dayton peace accord earmarked some $5 billion for Bosnia's reconstruction and the Bosnian Serbs are supposed to get a third of this sum. But American officials have warned that unless the Bosnian Serbs accept the terms of the Dayton peace accord they will not receive international assistance. The Bosnian Serb economy is in shambles. While the Bosnian Croats and Muslims have received most of the funds allocated to them, the Bosnian Serbs have received only two per cent of the money earmarked for them under the Dayton Accord.

Moreover, political and military developments in Bosnia indicate that the international community is stepping up pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to adhere to the principles of the Dayton Accord. The 900,000 Bosnian Serbs are at a historic watershed. Their country is being torn apart by a civil war that has pitted moderates headed by Plavsic against hard-line supporters of Karadzic.

Last week, US troops and the NATO-led international peace force withdrew from the strategic Brcko Bridge in an apparent attempt to defuse tensions ahead of the municipal elections scheduled for this weekend. The Americans are backing Plavsic whom they see as a voice for reason and moderation. Plavsic, a one-time Karadzic supporter, is now seen as a counterbalance to Karadzic and his hard-line henchmen.

Officials from the international bodies organising the elections, especially the United Nations, are optimistic that the mediators will convince the Bosnian Serbs to join in the poll. But Karadzic and many of his Bosnian Serb supporters are calling for a boycott of the elections. They say that to vote is a betrayal of the national cause. The pro-Karadzic paper *Glas Srpski* (Serb Voice) printed in Banja Luka called on "all Serbs who built Republika Srpska [the Bosnian Serb Republic] with courage, intellect and strength" to boycott the municipal elections and to defend Republika Srpska from those who seek to obliterate it.

Pale, the hard-line Bosnian Serb stronghold and self-styled capital of the Republika Srpska, is in the clutches of Karadzic's supporters. Plavsic and her supporters have been banished to Banja Luka, a city that is politically divided between Plavsic and Karadzic supporters. NATO-led international troops, widely regarded as an occupying army by Bosnian Serb hard-liners, have set up traffic control points on roads leading to Banja Luka because Karadzic supporters are planning a giant rally against Plavsic, the US and the UN.

The Bosnian Serb news agency, SRNA, stated that the "people's rage had turned into a devastating movement" against NATO, UN police and cars with license plates from the Muslim-Croat federation, which together with the Bosnian Serb sub-state, Republika Srpska, makes up Bosnia. Serb leaders have yet to make a firm commitment to participate in the voting after issuing threats to boycott the elections.

The international envoy to Bosnia, Carlos Westendorp, expressed his satisfaction that the Bosnian Serbs will participate in the elections and said that a boycott of the polls will backfire. But Westendorp was hopeful that he could enlist the support of the powerful Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic who has a strong influence in the Republika Srpska. "Milosevic has great influence over the authorities in Pale. He has to help us to be able to help them," Westendorp told reporters in Banja Luka on Tuesday.

The international force (SFOR), nicknamed "SS-FOR" by pro-Karadzic forces, has moved into Bosnian Serb towns to prevent fighting between pro-Plavsic and pro-Karadzic forces. But a majority of Bosnian Serbs see SFOR as instigating the violence. There are increasing signs that the NATO-led troops are running out of patience with the Bosnian Serb hard-liners and want to deal a decisive blow to their military strength.

Karadzic himself has fled underground but his supporters are determined to continue the fight against Plavsic and SFOR. The whereabouts of Karadzic are unknown but there are indications that he has fled abroad. The pressing question today is: can the NATO-led SFOR contain the threat posed by the Bosnian Serb hard-liners quickly and thoroughly, so as to put an end to the civil war?

Edited by **Gamal Nkrumah**



The Karadzic conundrum

Mustafa Abdallah

Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

1 9 8 After intense debate in the House of Commons, the British authorities dealt with the thorny problem of the *nine Egyptians languishing in prison for being* involved in the Dinshaway incident. To calm down nationalist sentiment in Egypt and popular opinion in France, amnesty was accorded to the *prisoners on the 16th anniversary of Abbas Helmi II's* ascension to the throne **Dr Yunan Labib Rizk** examines the press reports of the time

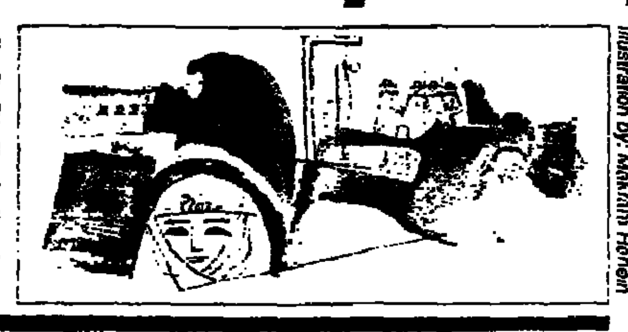


Illustration by: Makram Henein

Tuesday, 7 January 1908 marked the 16th anniversary of the investiture of Abbas *Helmi II as* khedive of Egypt. A special event was scheduled for this day, one intended to *appease* the nationalist sentiments of the Egyptian people. It came in the form of a *royal edict*, the text of which was published in *Al-Ahram*: "As we are moved by our natural disposition to mercy and clemency, having taken the opinion of the minister of justice in accordance with Article 68 of the Penal Code, and in accordance with the approval of the British government, it is our will to pardon the nine individuals whose names *follow and* to stay the remainder of the sentence pronounced against them on 27 June 1906 by the [military] court that had been formed in accordance with the royal edict promulgated *on* 32 February 1895." The prisoners to be pardoned were none other than the peasants involved *in the* notorious Dinshaway incident a year and a half earlier.

The events leading up to this amnesty began shortly after the sentences were *pronounced* against numerous inhabitants of that Delta village, several of whom were condemned *to death*. The unusually harsh sentences caused an outcry in the national press. *Al-Liwa'*, the newspaper owned by nationalist leader Mustafa Kamel, spearheaded the campaign, *although* other national newspapers, notably *Al-Ahram*, were equally outraged. In one of his *many* articles *on* the subject, Mustafa Kamel wrote, "The Dinshaway incident occurred at a time when the British public held the highest esteem for their officials responsible for Egyptian affairs. Yet, their guillotine and the method of executing the sentences precipitated a *wave of shock to spread* throughout that country and voices of condemnation were heard from all quarters."

The condemnation of the Dinshaway incident was taken up by France. This, too, was startling, not least because two *years previously France had signed* the Entente Cordiale with Britain, by virtue of which it had pledged not to hamper British affairs in Egypt. However, so outraged were the French that conscience won out and even French newspapers including *Le Figaro* were moved to speak out. Its article, "To the British nation and the civilised world," published in full by *Al-Liwa' on* 18 July 1906, *said*, "A *most* distressing event has occurred in Dinshaway, a small village in the Egyptian Delta, such that it has moved humanitarian sympathies throughout the world. Free *and independent-minded* men *in* England have raised their voices to ask whether it accorded with the dignity, honour and welfare of the British government to allow such tyranny and cruelty to be perpetrated in its name. Indeed, it merits the censure of all who are truly concerned with humanity *and* justice."

According to the Egyptian historian Abdel-Rahman Al-Rafie, the *Figaro* article was instrumental in the clamour *the Dinshaway incident* provoked in the House of Commons. It was unprecedented that the House of Commons should devote itself so vehemently to the affairs of the British occupation in Egypt which had just reached its quarter of a century mark. Over a *period of several days. Foreign* Minister Sir Edward Grey was subject to angry questioning in parliament. The publicity this debate received in Egypt provoked such consternation among the occupation authorities in Cairo that the chargé d'affaires for the British High *Commission in Cairo wrote to London* warning that this campaign would have the gravest consequences for the situation in Egypt and fuel anti-British hatred. He added that already some peasants had thrown stones at a British irrigation inspector, injuring him severe*ly, and another group of peasants had* thrown a British soldier off the back of his donkey and kicked him repeatedly in the stomach.

Thus fortified with weapons of his own, Sir Grey delivered a statement to the House of Commons in July saying that the trial had been conducted in accordance with all legal procedures and that one *condition for selecting* the British members of the tribunal was that they knew Arabic and were familiar with the circumstances of rural Egyptian life. As for the flogging to which some of the peasants were sentenced, Grey argued that although this form of punishment had no longer *been practiced in* Egypt, it was sanctioned by the edict 1895. He then presented a medical report he had received from Cairo testifying that those who had been subjected to this form of *punishment were in sound health. As a* final warning, he said that should the British occupation officials in Egypt continue to be subject to such criticisms, it may give rise to a general rebellion.

Although the statement may have satisfied officials in Cairo, the Foreign Office *still had to produce a White Paper* containing the full translation of all hearings, testimony and evidence in the trial. This served to placate the House of Commons for a while. However, those involved in Egyptian Affairs in the Foreign Office knew they had to do something in order to put this incident firmly behind them and the first anniversary of the Dinshaway confirmed them in this belief.

On that day, 13 June 1907, *Al-Liwa'*, in its Arabic, French and English editions, featured an article by Mustafa Kamel attacking the British for their conduct throughout the incident and refuting the allegations of fanaticism that had been leveled against the Egyptians involved. It concluded by demanding amnesty for the prisoners.

Al-Ahram, too, took up the appeal. Its article to this effect, appearing on 29 *June 1907, was entitled* "Amnesty for the prisoners of Dinshaway". In contrast to Mustafa Kamel's impassioned rhetoric, this article was cool and well-reasoned. This mournful incident, it argued, was linked with the name of Lord Cromer. Now that the former high *commissioner had left the country and* was replaced by the more accommodating Sir Eldon Gorst, it was time to forget the rancour it caused.

The article listed what it imagined would be the British arguments. "If the British say we were harsh in the defence *of the honour of our army*, we would counter by saying that, if the villagers of Dinshaway had acted ignorantly, the British military and all branches of the occupation authorities have exceeded *them in obtuseness. If the British* say that they do not want to grant an amnesty because that would be interpreted as a victory by our Egyptian political adversaries [the Nationalist Party], we respond that Egyptians have an independent will. If the Egyptian people *demand pardon* and *shake the corners of* the earth to attain it, they are justified in doing so. The people that have no will do not merit being ranked among nations, nor is it fit for them to aspire for progress and advancement." *Concluding* its appeal, the article argues, "since it is the case that the prisoners of Dinshaway had been subject to extra-ordinary sentences and punishments, another exception should be made for them by granting them amnesty." Finally, it cautioned the British: "As long as those wretched individuals remain in the dark confines of their cells, the arguments of the adversaries of British policy remain alive and true."

Over the next few months, *Al-Ahram*, along with other national newspapers awaited the outcome of the communications between Gorst and his superiors in London. The deliberations resulted in the Foreign Office's approval of amnesty, but, to preserve the prestige of the government, it was decided that this would take place on an official occasion. The following 16th anniversary of the Khedive's succession to the throne, which *was to take place on 8 January* 1908 proved most opportune.

On 23 December 1907, Gorst met with Abbas who welcomed the idea. The Khedive also agreed to the High Commissioner's suggestion that the edict be announced on that occasion *would include the phrase that the* amnesty was granted "in accordance with the approval of the British government."

The following day, the Nationalist Party's French language mouthpiece, *L'Etendard*, *received* a dispatch from its London correspondent announcing that the Khedive would soon issue a proclamation pardoning the prisoners from Dinshaway. Gorst was furious. This could only mean that Foreign Office circles had leaked the news, thereby dimin*ishing the positive impact* it would have had if the khedive had announced it himself. For its part, *Al-Ahram* rejoiced at the news. It demonstrated "that the English people had succeeded in pressuring their government to assume once more the qualities of justice and fairness in response to the Egyptian nation's cry of pain and grievance. We firmly believe that the British people do not wish to rule other nations by tyranny and coercion, but rather that they hope that the British yoke on those nations *forced* to bear it should be light and painless."

As the affair in the small Delta village acquired international ramifications, Egyptian newspapers were not alone in celebrating the good news. *Al-Ahram*'s correspondent in London reported: "Not a single British newspaper, even among the conservative press, found fault with the decision. Indeed, most of the newspapers say that the amnesty is small compensation for that grave affair. And one newspaper said that one could only wish it were possible to bring back those who had died in that deplorable manner."

In the interim, before the official promulgation of the decree, officials had to work out the precise arrangements *for releasing the prisoners. They* were particularly concerned that this take place with the least commotion possible so as not to provide the opportunity for widespread nationalist demonstrations. Evidently, *Al-Ahram* got wind of some of the preparations, for it reported: "The Prison Authority has supplied a special boat to transport the prisoners at 4.00pm on 7 *January from Al-Qanatir* Al-Khayriya Prison to Dinshaway where they will be set free to return to their families. The government has taken the precaution to transport the prisoners secretly in order to prevent public demonstrations."

There is little doubt that preparations for demonstrations were under way. Although *Al-Ahram* could not have known this at the time, Gorst had written several dispatches to London to report that the Nationalist Party was organising demonstrations to welcome the prisoners.

When, on 7 January, the khedive declared the amnesty, the general reaction was not as jubilant as authorities had hoped. It was precisely the phrase "in accordance with the approval of the British government" that rankled. *In* its 10 January edition, *Al-Ahram* perhaps epitomised the reaction when it described the occasion as "the bitter-sweet amnesty". The sweetness, according to *Al-Ahram* was that "the spirit of mercy has fallen upon those who, in inflicting punishment, allowed considerations of politics to outweigh considerations of the law and allowed themselves to abandon all wisdom, to succumb to the thirst for revenge and violence and to exceed all bounds of the law by using the execution of an individual to terrorise 12 million." *As for the bitterness*, this too had its origins in politics "which corrupts everything it touches and tinges even the best of deeds with a sour taste. It is as though the occupation is intent on convincing us that it can perform no act untainted by deceit and no good deed free of suspicion. It has thus permitted the amnesty, not out of mercy, but in order to be rid of an annoying problem that kept resurfacing wherever it looked."



The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.

Increase in Tunisian-Egyptian relations

A REPORT from the Commercial Representation Office stated that the *volume of commercial exchange between* Egypt and Tunisia rose from US$60mn in the previous year *to $100mn during the current year. The goal of $300mn* is expected to be reached by the year 2000.

Indicators show that commercial exchange between Egypt and Tunisia has increased by 20 per cent during the past few months, a result of the decisions taken and implemented by the Egyptian-Tunisian Higher Cooperative Council towards enhancing commercial activity between the two countries.



Agreement with the EU forthcoming

FOREIGN Minister Amr Moussa stated that an agreement is expected to be reached with the EU at the end of the year. The agreement is of special importance because it will set up a free zone for North African and Mediterranean countries.

Moussa added that Egypt's foreign policy is geared towards fostering economic cooperation with the EU, USA and countries of South-East Asia.

Moussa confirmed the importance of consolidating cooperation with African countries as well.

NBE: Egypt's flagship bank

PURSUING its pioneering role on the banking scene, the National Bank of Egypt (NBE) has taken an unprecedented step by concluding *an agreement with IFC to provide a hedge against the risks* of exchange and interest rate fluctuations. Such an agreement applies to loans, forward contracts, options, and swaps concluded on behalf of customers or banks.

The IFC concludes such an agreement subsequent to a meticulous review of the bank's financial position, loans, collateral and *the credit worthiness of the customer.*

It is worth mentioning that the crisis of exchange rate fluctuations in Egypt was conductive to considerable losses in the '80s, requiring thus the convocation of a number of conferences to handle the issue. NBE played a prominent role in holding such conferences and in the meanwhile, *international institutions* interfered to safeguard companies from such heavy losses.

In the 1984 Conference on Interest Rate Risks, papers submitted highlighted that losses stemming from fluctuated and several exchange rates accounted for LE5.3bn, since the dollar was formally exchanged with LE0.84, and in the meanwhile, companies were requested to exchange the dollar at market prices, i.e. LE2.00, to reimburse their loans.

In the '90s, interest rates soared to 21 per cent, with an increase of 13 per cent, and consequently, investments were thrown in complete turmoil. Some enterprises stopped operation, since they were *unable to survive owing to the high cost of living.*

Hence, formal exchange contracts and agreements provide a hedge against future exchange and interest rate fluctuations, forestalling thus unexpected heavy losses.

Furthermore, NBE extends distinguished services in the *field of* foreign transactions. The bank conducts forex operations on behalf of customers and other banks. In the fiscal year 1995/96, total operations accounted for US$1bn. NBE also conducted *forward purchase and sale of* different currencies on behalf of customers. Moreover, the bank expanded its transaction in the money market to amount to $2bn during 1995/96.

It is worth mentioning that the eminent position that NBE enjoys, as well as the relative stability of interest and exchange rates constitute the basic elements that encouraged the IFC to conclude such an agreement.

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Al-Ahram Weekly

Off to a bad start

Princess Diana was laid to rest on Saturday. Days later, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright arrived in Jerusalem in the hope of preventing the peace process from meeting with the same fate.

But the pro-Israeli bias of the secretary of state seemed to speak louder to her than does the calling for a just and comprehensive peace.

Affirming to the Israelis that no people have suffered and endured more than them, she said: "We are with you in your insistence that the Palestinian Authority fulfil the responsibilities and obligations it has undertaken." Her only concession to Israeli violations was a grudging nod in the direction of Israel's failure to comply with the scheduled redeployment of forces from the West Bank.

Just as Netanyahu has sought to have Arafat shoulder the responsibility of the last suicide bombings in Jerusalem, Albright also sees acts of violence as a product of lax security measures on the part of the Palestinian Authority.

With these kinds of biases in Jerusalem, the miasma of decay is now more evident than before. Neither Netanyahu nor Albright, despite statements to the contrary, really seem to grasp that Israeli security is not the main issue at hand.

Simply stated, Israeli security will not be realised if the rights of the Palestinians are not addressed with the same vigour and diligence with which misdirected blame for violence is heaped on Arafat.

Closures are not the answer. Nor are mass arrests. What Albright should be saying is that we are with you (Israelis and Palestinians) in your struggle to overcome the extremism that characterises Netanyahu's policy-making.

If Albright has any doubts about the impact of her statements, she must realise that failure to move this process along may ensure that the next funeral is one where peace is the guest of honour in the casket.

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A state of confidence

It is no longer the peace process that is at stake, writes **Ibrahim Nafie**, but the very possibility of peace itself. Will the US secretary of state salvage the situation?

Has Madeleine Albright come to the Middle East to save the peace process, or to keep the peace? The question, put by some American political observers, is not as absurd as it first appears. Netanyahu, by all appearances, has established a sharp distinction between the two goals. Clearly, he would like the US secretary of state to jump-start the negotiating process while granting him the latitude to unilaterally determine the substance of what constitutes "peace". It would appear, however, that Netanyahu is alone in perceiving the goal of Albright's visit thus.

Albright has delineated her task in the Middle East in a manner that leaves no room for doubt. Several days ago, an official State Department spokesman said that the US is still committed to a comprehensive peace settlement for the Arab-Israeli conflict and that President Clinton and Secretary of State Albright will do their utmost to achieve that goal.

Arab leaders have outlined the factors that will salvage not the peace process but the very prospect of peace. In their recent meeting in Cairo, President Mubarak, King Hussein and Yasser Arafat said that a lasting peace can only be achieved through a just and comprehensive settlement on all tracks. This settlement must be brought about as soon as possible, and in accordance with the principles that were unanimously accepted as the foundation for the peace process by the participants in the Madrid conference. Israel must not seek to impose new conditions and it must desist from all forms of belligerence. It should take no unilateral actions with regard to settlements, Jerusalem or occupied Syrian territory, that contravene its current obligations under the agreements that have already been signed and the spirit of peace. Finally, it must take tangible steps to demonstrate that it is willing and prepared to resume serious negotiations on all tracks.

Sadly, Netanyahu's behaviour betrays nothing but the most reckless shortsightedness. His attitude toward the PA and Yasser Arafat is a case in point. From the moment Dennis Ross left the region after his attempt to restore at least a modicum of the eroded confidence between the Palestinians and the Israelis, Netanyahu has pursued a relentless campaign of surprisingly malicious attacks on Arafat. Whenever the US announces that the PA has taken positive measures toward security cooperation with Israel in order to pave the way for Albright's visit, the Israeli government immediately seeks to cast aspersions on these measures. Several Israeli Labour Party officials have warned the Israeli government to rethink the dangers of the campaign to disparage Yasser Arafat. "Do you want to have to deal with Hamas?" asked one Labour Party leader, a main Israeli negotiator in the Oslo Accords. "No matter what you think of Arafat, if we lose him as a partner we'll have lost the entire peace process."

At no single phase has the peace process suffered more than since Netanyahu came to power. He has done everything in his power to undermine it. He refuses to recognise the principle of land for peace, a principle accepted by the former Israeli government, which served as the basis for direct negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. He has persistently refused to implement the Israeli government's obligations, under Oslo, which precede the final status negotiations. He has given the go-ahead to the construction of new Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories in blatant violation of the Oslo Accords.

Having single-handedly generated the tensest climate in the region for a decade, Netanyahu is now obsessed with having Yasser Arafat prove his good intentions in the fight against terrorism. Evidently the only way Arafat will satisfy him is to arrest thousands of Palestinians and confiscate their "weapons" in order to crush what Netanyahu calls the infrastructure of terrorism in Palestinian territories.

Yet Israel itself, when the entire force of its occupation army with its extraordinary powers were behind it, proved incapable of doing what it now expects Arafat to do by himself. Moreover, Netanyahu expects Arafat to single-handedly mount an all-out war against "the Palestinian terrorist cells" without offering the least guarantee that the Israeli government will then abide by its commitments toward the Palestinians under Oslo.

Since US diplomacy has reactivated its drive to spur the peace process into action, Palestinian cooperation with Israel in security matters was considered the primary condition for restoring confidence between the two sides. If confidence is really to be restored, however, it must be founded on a broader base than security. As Albright herself said, confidence can only be restored if each side knows where the negotiations will lead them. For the Palestinians, this means a Palestinian state, the goal which prompted them to sign the Oslo Accords. As a recent report from the US Council on Foreign Affairs put it: "It will be impossible to restore confidence between both sides unless it is sufficiently clear that the peace process not only comprises Israeli security but the creation of a Palestinian state. The negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians will produce nothing unless they are founded upon the recognition of the Palestinian right to a state in Gaza and the West Bank."

This helps contexualise Albright's emphasis, in her speech of 6 August, on the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, an aspect of the conflict to which Netanyahu has been entirely oblivious.

Albright's task during this visit is not an easy one. If she is to help bring the peace process back on course, she will have to address some fundamental flaws in Netanyahu's thinking. Prime among these flaws is the fact that the peace process is not an aim in itself.

One suspects that Netanyahu thinks very much along the lines of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhaq Shamir, who remarked, following the Madrid peace conference, that he planned to make the negotiations with the Palestinians last for decades.

One is loath to contemplate the spectre of a situation which brings neither peace nor war, a situation certain to spark the frustration of millions who have their hopes pinned on the fruits of a true and lasting peace.

Will Albright live up to our expectations and demonstrate that it is her aim to revive the prospect of peace, and not simply to bring the parties back to interminable rounds of negotiations?

Celebrating Franco-Egyptian relations

The bicentennial of Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt will be celebrated next year. **Mohamed Sid-Ahmed** believes the event is shrouded in ambiguities that, for the sake of Franco-Egyptian friendship, should be dissipated

At a dinner held in honour of French President Jacques Chirac on his visit to Egypt a few months ago, I took the opportunity to bring up a controversial issue that I believe needs to be addressed openly at this time. Now that it has been decided to celebrate the bicentennial of Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt as an expression of the endurance of Franco-Egyptian relations, it is useful to try and define the exact nature of the event. Was it *emancipatory*, as symbolised by Champollion's deciphering of the Rosetta Stone and the introduction of the first printing house into Egypt, or was it, on the contrary, an event of a *colonial* nature? It should be remembered that the expedition had a clear military objective, namely, to cut off Britain's route to India. As such, it can be regarded as the first inter-colonial war of the 19th century.

A proposal I put to Mr Chirac as a way out of the dilemma was to launch a Bonaparte expedition in reverse, as it were, that is, to make its focal point in France rather than in Egypt. With France's Muslim community now second in size only to its Catholic community, and given that, thanks to its Cartesian tradition, France is better placed than any other European nation to disprove Huntington's theory on the inevitability of clashes between civilisations, specifically between the Judeo-Christian and Islamic, France should take the lead in developing an inter-cultural dialogue. I pointed out that that was too important an undertaking to be left to academic French institutions such as the Institut du Monde Arabe, however prestigious it may be, and should be assumed at the supreme political level of the presidency of the republic.

The celebrations have already begun. My good friend, the French intellectual, Paul Noirot, is setting up a project in collaboration with a number of French and Egyptian scholars to produce an updated version of the famous *Description de l'Egypte* which the scientists who accompanied Bonaparte to Egypt produced at the time. However, because many of the more spectacular celebrations are scheduled for 1998, which is the bicentennial anniversary of the expedition itself, and not of any of the cultural achievements for which it is now being remembered, many Egyptians perceive the celebrations as glorifying the colonial rather than the cultural aspect of the event. This can only be counter productive at a time such developments as the failure of the Middle East peace process, the revival of fundamentalism, not only Islamic but also Jewish, and the degeneration of religious strife into blaspheming the Prophet Mohamed himself, lend credence to theories like the one propounded by Samuel Huntington.

The expedition's main cultural achievement was Champollion's deciphering of the language of the pharaohs in 1821, thanks to the discovery of the Rosetta stone which carried the same inscription in three languages: Hieroglyphics, Demotic and Greek, of which at least one, Greek, was well known. This was instrumental in deciphering the written language of Ancient Egypt and unlocking the secrets of its civilisation. But making Champollion's discovery the frame of reference would mean postponing the festivities for another quarter of a century. Obviously this would defeat the purpose of the whole exercise, which reflects the desire of both France and Egypt to further bolster the friendly relations between the two countries. This is particularly important for Egypt at a time Paris is the only western capital to adopt stands on the Arab-Israeli conflict that are appreciated by the Arab parties. A compromise solution could be to put the festivities back one year, that is, to 1999, exactly two hundred years after the Rosetta stone was unearthed. In this way, the celebrations would be attributed to a cultural event, while also satisfying the political objective of holding them now.

But there are technical difficulties in the way of postponement. Theatres and museums have been mobilised for the occasion and such cultural events cannot easily be rescheduled. To play down the significance of holding the commemoration in 1998, it has been decided to convene a seminar in the amphitheatre of Cairo University next year to debate the impact of the French expedition on the various aspects of Egypt's modern history. The airing of all possible viewpoints could help dissipate ambiguities and help establish the ground rules for a more healthy relationship between the two countries, purged of any colonial connotations.

Actually, the celebrations can help dissipate much of the suspicion with which each side of the North-South divide regards the other, particularly across the Mediterranean. To a very great extent Europe remains central to the ongoing Middle East crisis. The persecution which Europe visited on its Jewish communities through the ages, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, has undergone a transmutation in the second half of the century in which the Israeli Jews are today persecuting the Palestinians. This contemporary expression of a pattern of behaviour that originated in Europe will not be overcome without a debate involving Europe. Because France was the arena of the Dreyfus affair which sparked the Zionist movement exactly a century ago last week, but which also blew the lid off the persecution of Jews throughout Europe, France is particularly well equipped to play a decisive role in promoting more healthy relations across the Mediterranean basin on the eve of the 21st century.

An Egyptian identity

By Naguib Mahfouz

There has been much discussion concerning our identity. It is said that we are of Pharaonic, not Arab, descent, that we are northerners and not Africans, or that we are Mediterranean peoples who have no roots in Asia.

In my opinion, our homeland is the source of our identity, something which has nothing to do with race. Egyptians represent an integral culture, formed by races of different civilisations — Arabs, Sudanese, Turks and Moors as well as Ancient Egyptians. The common denominator has been our homeland, which has made one people of migrants of many races and civilisations, fusing their traits to form our national and cultural identity.

Once we were Pharaonic. We became Graeco-Pharaonic, then Graeco-Roman-Pharaonic. Then we were Copts — at least until the Arabo-Islamic conquest. So how can we separate and distinguish all these cultural elements that have been moulded together over the centuries to form a single nationality?

It is the homeland that bestows feeling of identity. Our culture is of this land. We must not try to deconstruct this national character and reduce it to its original components, because that would cause it to lose all its cohesion. It would be like reducing water to oxygen and hydrogen — gases drifting away and disappearing in the air.

Based on an interview by Mohamed Salmawy.

The Press This Week

Will she deliver?

Al-Gomhuria: "The main significance of the catastrophe Israel has faced in Lebanon is that it set the stage for the Albright visit. Netanyahu admitted the enormity of the disaster, but it seems he has not realised that suicide attacks are here to stay and that all of Lebanon resists the occupation, not just the Shi'ites. An arrogant Netanyahu is leading the peace process to the brink of war. He does not seem to have learnt anything from the Jerusalem and south Lebanon incidents and his way of solving problems is to create new ones."
(Kamel Zoheiry, 7 September)

Al-Usbooe: "During her forthcoming visit, Albright should hear the angry voice of the Arabs protesting against her blind bias towards Israel. This bias threatens the whole Middle East, particularly Israel, and puts US interests in jeopardy. It is imperative that she should revise her views about the stability of the region. Albright should also learn that the Arabs seek not just any peace but a just, lasting and comprehensive peace which would guarantee the return of all occupied Arab lands and the establishment of a Palestinian state. Failing this, the Arabs will have no option but to turn away from peace and uphold their legitimate rights, even if this struggle takes a long time and means that there will be no security for Israel as long as it lasts."
(Osama Ayoub, 8 September)

Al-Ahram: "No one in the Arab region asks the US to be anything but realistic. The US should uphold the international principles according to which the peace process was initiated in Madrid. There is a difference between realism and the policy of *fait accompli* which Israel is enforcing in the occupied Arab lands. This is something the US should get straight before Albright's visit. Realism does not mean the continuation of pressure or more Palestinian concessions in favour of Israel's security. Arafat himself has made all the concessions he could possibly make. He cannot make any more concessions without giving up rights and lands, something neither he nor his colleagues can do."
(Ihsan Bakr, 7 September)

Al-Mussawar: "It is very clear that the party that would like to see Albright's mission founder are the Israeli hawks headed by Netanyahu. They know her opinions on the question of settlements and Jebel Abu Ghneim and are aware that she seeks a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, something Netanyahu does not wish to see. He believes that peace with the Arabs is not an urgent issue and that Peres' hopes for a new Middle East are mere illusions. Netanyahu believes that Israel should impose its will on the Arabs through force. He also believes that Israel should annex Jerusalem and most of the West Bank and the Golan on the basis of a mixture of Biblical and security claims."
(Makram Mohamed Ahmed, 5 September)

October: "Albright will soon be starting her visit to the Middle East. This has been overshadowed by the defection of the North Korean ambassador in Cairo. He was granted asylum by the US Embassy and has since appeared in Washington where he has been given asylum in exchange for information concerning Middle East affairs and Korean missile shipments to countries in the region. The US wants to block the procurement of defensive arms by nations wishing to ward off Israeli aggression. This is the message that seems likely to reach the Arabs before Albright's arrival!"
(Mohamed Abdel-Wareth, 7 September)

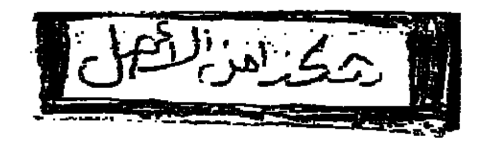
Rose El-Youssef: "By continuing a policy of collective punishment for the Palestinians and besieging Arafat with accusations that he has not liquidated terrorist groups in the self-rule areas, the Israeli government shows that it has not properly assessed the situation. In my opinion, attempts to isolate Arafat and undermine his influence are not in anyone's interest. On the contrary, such attempts are detrimental to the region and to Israel in particular. Unless Netanyahu admits the failure of his policies, which have led to a marked deterioration in the situation, the worst is bound to happen."
(Mahmoud El-Tohamy, 8 September)

Al-Akhbar: "Yasser Arafat does not have to declare unconditional surrender, as Japan and Germany did at the end of World War II in 1945. Arafat is still in a strong position despite all efforts to belittle him and reduce him to the level of a security guard. The US State Department spokesman admitted as much when he said that Albright's main task was to defend Israel's security and that she would call on Arafat to do his duty to preserve the existence of Israel. This simply means that Israel's security is not so much tied to tanks, planes or sadistic police forces as to the efforts of Arafat."
(Mohamed Fahmi, 8 September)

Compiled by **Hala Saqr**



When I drew Mother Teresa, I was thinking of a face marked by the weariness of the world she left so recently. Years of labour had left her skin stretched taut over her skull, and I sought to sketch her face keeping in mind only the barest essentials. Thinking of her compassion with the pain and misery of others, I understated her eyes, as if they could no longer bear much suffering, and were turned inwards, to contemplation and prayer. The white head-covering which was such a crucial part of her ascetic attire falls in soft folds around her tired features, while I drew her hands joined in prayer, and scarred by the work she did.



Close up

Salama A. Salama

Silent generals

Nobody with the slightest conscience, religious conviction, or intelligence could possibly turn a blind eye to the monstrosities which are taking place in Algeria on a scale and with a ferocity last witnessed in the Middle Ages. We cannot keep silent to please those in Algeria who object to anyone intervening in "their affairs"; we cannot ignore the daily slaughters in which the blood of children, woman and elderly people is shed in ever more barbaric outpourings of violence.

The past few weeks have seen an increase in violence that defies all belief. The number of deaths has reached the hundreds; the massacres have moved from outlying areas to Algiers itself. Algerians are being slaughtered every day; their corpses are mutilated with axes. On our TV screens, we can all see the streets strewn with bloody corpses and the charred bodies of children.

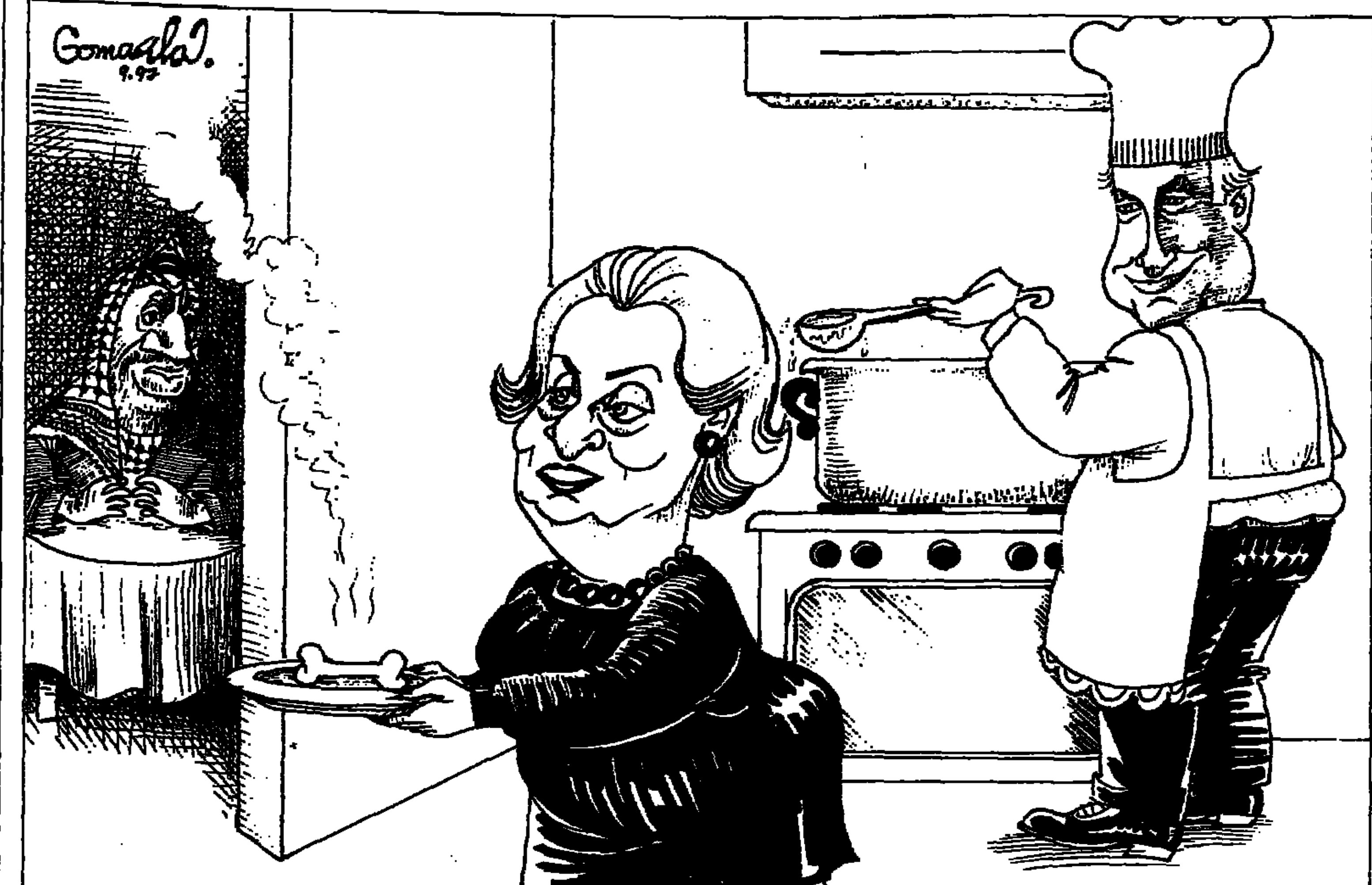
Strangest of all is the attitude of the government of Algeria. It has no explanation for what is happening; having accused terrorist groups of committing these crimes, it refuses to countenance the possibility of any international investigation. Nor will it explain why these crimes are being committed on the doorstep of the army's barracks, or why the criminals are never found — a strange silence, to say the least, when one considers that each massacre lasts between three and five hours.

The Algerian government is now embroiled in a dispute with the UN secretary-general, triggered when Kofi Annan requested dialogue and tolerance as a means of putting an end to the violence. The government seems to look upon this initiative as interference in its internal affairs — a violation of its sovereignty. Having refused Annan's request, the regime then arrested the moderate Islamist leader Abbas Madani, who had just been released, citing his communication with Annan as the reason.

This dubious stance cannot clear the government of the suspicion that it is responsible for the barbarity in Algeria — if not by actual participation, then at least through a collusion of silence. Even if these massacres were not directly organised and executed by the government or military factions, the regime still stands accused for having failed to prevent them, or even protected the innocent civilians whose throats were slit. Sixty thousand people have been murdered in the past five years; the government has allowed this to happen. Reliable Western observers report that these atrocities are committed not only by terrorists, but that factions in the army, Mafia groups and influential families, all fighting for wealth and power, are participating directly, and that Buyehia's government is merely a fragile cover for a failing regime.

As for France, the West, and the Arab world, they have turned a blind eye to the persistent civil war, and remain incapable of knowing what is really taking place behind the walls of Algiers. They all bear a cultural, political and historical responsibility for the brutal crimes that make up what may be the ugliest genocide of the late twentieth century.

There must be a very ugly secret behind the Algerian government's staunch resistance to any foreign mediation or international inquiry. It refuses even to allow the foreign media to approach the areas where these crimes have been committed. It is time for the world to be told the truth about what is happening in Algeria.



Soapbox

People's bombs

Islamist activists began their campaign of suicide bombings only about a year after Palestinian-Israeli negotiations to implement the Oslo agreement began. Some points relevant to this campaign must be taken into consideration.

First, occupied peoples have the right to resort to any and all means, including armed struggle, to rid themselves of occupation. Indiscriminate operations or the targeting of civilians are *unacceptable, of course*.

By the time the first bombs exploded, the Oslo negotiating process was in serious trouble, and the peace process had lost *all credibility due to Israel's violation of UN resolutions and its* efforts to impose its hegemony on the Occupied Territories. It would be inaccurate to say that the Islamists killed the peace process — Israel had already battered it to death.

Israel's overwhelming force, and the sincere commitment of the PA to strangle any resistance to occupation, have provided the perfect pretext for people who know that impartial justice cannot be expected. Israeli policy constitutes an invitation to violence.

On the eve of the Madrid Conference, the Islamists and the opposition parties in the PLO called on the Palestinians in the Territories to demonstrate against the peace process. The people *did the opposite,* and demonstrated in support of peace. That sent a clear message to the opposition, which then adopted a low-*profile stance in deference to the people's* decision. During the negotiations in Washington, which were constantly blocked by Israel, *the opposition refrained from acts of* resistance out of respect for the people's choice. Neither Arafat nor Israel can stop the bombs. *Only the general public, which* has a stake in a credible peace process, can end the violence if it so chooses.



This week's Soapbox speaker is a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, representing Gaza.

Haidar Abdel-Shafi

Goliath in Palestine

Only people's violence can counter a campaign of collective punishment, writes Amin Hewedy. In a war where mutual destruction is out of the question, mutual damage rules the field

On 29 July, two human bombs exploded in a vegetable market in Western Jerusalem, which is defended by Israeli troops. The Israeli report said 13 persons were killed and 70 were injured. I am convinced the number of casualties must have been much higher. It is common practice for Israel to play down its losses to keep public morale high and, in this case, to avoid the government's collapse. Israeli propaganda has long employed this technique. During the War of Attrition, I was personally involved in field inspection after an Israeli patrol unit had attempted to cross to the western bank of the Suez Canal. Our troops, stationed in defence positions there, killed the entire unit. As the soldiers' corpses bobbed in the water before our eyes, we heard an Israeli radio broadcast reporting that the troops had succeeded in crossing the Canal, *stormed the Egyptian defence lines and returned,* without losses, safely to their base.

Following the explosion, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu *gesticulated, mouthed the usual invectives,* and closed down the West Bank and Gaza, prohibiting exit or entry, blockading the unarmed Palestinian people, ordering the arrest of more Palestinians, *rounding up* children, women, old and young people, demolishing tens of houses, throwing families into the streets, and sending *more troops out. Then he directed his airforce to strike* the south of Lebanon, in a repeat performance of the measures undertaken by all previous Israeli governments. *This led Palestinian President Arafat to assert "Israel has* declared war on us," which is true, since the Israeli measures are tantamount to a declaration of war against an unarmed people.

The Israeli premier insisted that Yasser Arafat has failed to safeguard Israel's security, and demanded that those he designated as terrorists hand over their weapons. But the Israelis who died were not killed by machine guns, hand grenades or rockets. They were killed by Palestinians who blew themselves up to make a point. They killed as they themselves were killed. What can Yasser Arafat hand over? What does he have to give? The suicide bombers died heroically, like martyrs, like many others before them, and many heroes yet to come.

Netanyahu's demand is not only surprising, it also raises serious questions as to his knowledge of the nature of the conflict. He does not fully realise the developments in fighting tactics. Yet he is constantly talking about force as the only kind of diplomacy, the achievement of peace through force, peace by deterrence, and absolute security for Israel — but not the mutual security of Israel and the Arabs, since the Arabs, in his view, can only understand the language of power. These concepts are hardly pertinent to the current power struggle. In a "normal" war, the goal is to impose a particular outcome through the "exchange of destruction". In the present conflict, one side has only sub-conventional means which revolve around different basics, which include stones, slingshots, Molotov cocktails, civil dissent, and suicide bombers, all of which aim at imposing a particular outcome through "mutual damage".

This development centres the conflict around the ability to cause suffering, revealing the "impotence of power" and the "power of impotence". Bibi, however, may be excused for thinking, incorrectly, that his will is the *only force determining events. His knowledge of crisis* management has not evolved since he served as a paratrooper in a military unit. His ministers and party members *freely admit that he does not have sufficient knowl*edge of government, especially in such highly volatile conditions of war and peace. Such conditions require the *man at the helm to assess matters according to their stra*tegic, not their tactical, value. He must be able to comprehend that war and peace are interlinked, not separate.

Here are two contending sides, and one disputed land, or whatever remains of it to the east of the Green Line. One side has all the means of acting as it desires and preempting the reactions of the other side. The negotiations, in fact, are nothing more than a deal. One side must grow weary first. Bargaining is a matter of give and take, but here one party wants everything: land, security, peace, all of Jerusalem. It is virtually impossible to take everything and give nothing in return. By contrast, the other side possesses no more than a meagre amount of power, and has no hope of competing in an arms race. Therefore, it has abandoned all conventional strategies and adopted new, more modest ones, with remarkably effective results.

The strategy of mutual destruction is not applicable here, since the Palestinian side possesses nothing for the enemy to destroy. It has replaced that strategy by the other of "mutual damage", operating on the assumption that the capacity for inflicting minor harm can deter a powerful enemy.

If Israel's objective is to cling to the land it occupies, and to change its geographic and demographic features, the Palestinians' goal is to strike at the Israeli people, in order to estrange them from their government by causing a rift between the extremist government and the pacific majority. This goal stems from the belief that their strategy does not contravene any moral principle. War is not clean. It is what it is: blood, destruction, pain and fear. Nor, for that matter, does this goal contravene the accords signed between Palestinians and Israelis. The agreement concluded in April after the Qana massacre stipulates that civilians shall be excepted from combat. This stipulation is not respected by Israel, which continues to attack and harass civilians everyday, arresting and detaining them, firing at them and demolishing their houses. Collective punishment as exercised by Israel must be reciprocated.

If a powerful enemy seeks to impose its will, the weak*er side's aim must be to undermine this determination in* order to create a climate appropriate for bargaining and thus to regain some of its violated rights. The use of vi*olence is the only means at its disposal to achieve such* an objective when confronted by Israel's use of qualitatively and quantitatively overwhelming force. War is *the art of using violence with the maximum possible lev*erage. To recapture an occupied land, the will of the enemy must be channeled through a stream of blood.

Retribution must be proportional to the crime. If the method adopted is excessive, it becomes ineffectual. An aeroplane cannot deter a suicide bomber. A rocket cannot be used to resist a *thief*. An animal that has been slaughtered does not suffer more if it is then skinned.

In this conflict, the Palestinian resistance enjoys one major asset: the ability to move freely inside Israel with small, primitively armed units capable of paralysing large, well-equipped ones. The Arab armies were unable to reach the Israeli interior during all the wars, except for a few random missiles launched by Iraq. Undercover units, on the other hand, can operate unnoticed, move freely and inflict damage in cities like Tel Aviv, Ashkelon and Jerusalem. The children of the Intifada were also successful in this respect.

The resistance, moreover, has concentrated on inflicting as much harm as possible. Six suicide bombers exploded this year. Each attack left Israelis killed or wounded. Their families, neighbours, and the Israeli public in general felt the impact every time. The bombings have instilled a general fear of going out and congregating.

The Palestinians do not aim at stripping the Israelis of their power, simply because they are not capable of attaining that goal. Their aim, rather, is to terrorise the people in order to put pressure on the government. The Palestinians do not seek to defeat the Israeli army militarily, but to convince it that their cause is a just one. The use of violence breeds neither defeat nor victory, only pain and suffering. During the American civil war, General Sherman marched in Georgia burning plantations and destroying everything in sight. He commented: "If the people protest against this barbaric cruelty, my reply to them is that 'war is war'. If they and their kin seek peace, then they must put an end to the war."

Israeli intransigence makes it impossible to resolve the peace problem without suffering. The bombing of Hiroshima was the apex of violence. It was also a message which Tokyo heeded. It ended the war. Regrettably, Israeli conduct has turned Israelis and Palestinians alike into hostages. Neither can adopt a neutral stance.

*It is incomprehensible that Israel has made Yasser Ar*afat responsible for its security, but it is more perplexing still that Washington should back this decision. Israel *deals with its own security matters. It has never allowed* international or multinational forces, nor even treaties or agreements, to determine its security. How can Israel *have placed this responsibility on the oppressed? How* can it expect them to safeguard their occupiers?

One side, therefore, resorts to official or state violence *through the application of collective punishment.* The other side practices revolutionary or people's violence, in order to regain its land and its right to live. One side has an elaborate military arsenal at its disposal, while the other has only stones and primitive explosives. The war must be stopped. But how?

The intervention of the interior or defence ministries in Israel will not provide the solution. This is a bargaining process that sometimes reverts to force, and to violence if force is not adequate. The two sides have drunk the last, bitter dregs of violence. Will the Israeli premier insist on maintaining his stance, even at the cost of his post?

The decision is a difficult one for someone like Bibi, because only a far-sighted leader can see peace through the smoke of war. Netanyahu is not a leader. He is only the member of a paratrooper unit, pushed forward by destiny to become Israel's prime minister.

The writer is a former minister of defence and chief of General Intelligence.

To The Editor

Kashmir disputed

Sir- An article by Mohamed Ouda (*Al-Ahram Weekly*, 21-27 August) says, "Kashmir was the symbol and pride of Indian secularism: a Muslim state that chose to join India rather Pakistan. Over the past 50 years, Kashmir was transformed from an ideal secular state into one ravaged by Islamist, religious fanatics and fundamentalists."

Nothing can be farther from the truth. The state of Jammu and Kashmir is a disputed territory and has been so for the last five decades. Its future is to be decided by the people of Kashmir through a free and fair plebiscite to be conducted under the auspices of the United Nations. The disputed status of Kashmir is recognised by the United Nations and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. Kashmir never acceded to India. Even the documents relating to the accession of the Hindu Maharaja of this Muslim *majority* state, which have been paraded through the world, have been proved to be forged. The people of Kashmir, in any case, never accepted this accession and have always demanded their in*alienable* right of self-determination, as enshrined in the relevant resolutions of the UN. India accepted the disputed status of Kashmir in *1948 when it took this* issue to the United Nations and agreed to withdraw its forces and let the UN hold a free and fair plebiscite.

The writer erroneously gives the impression that *the struggle*, which has transformed itself into militant fundamentalist strife, poses a challenge to Indian secularism. The fact of the matter *is that Kashmir* is neither a territorial dispute between two states, nor a religious issue: it is a political problem which has to be settled according to UN resolutions which India has accepted but not honoured, *so far*. The relevant UN resolutions grant the right of self-determination to all the people of Kashmir which include the Hindus, the Buddhists, and of course the Muslims who happen to constitute a majority.

In this age of terrorism and religious fanaticism, it may suit the propagandists to project the struggle of Kashmiri people as religious fundamentalism. The fact is that the spectre of religious fundamentalism captured the headlines in the world media only in the last decade, while the struggle of the people of Kashmir is at least half a century old.

Objective reality in Kashmir has always been at variance with the official position *taken by the Indian government. Kashmir* calls for an urgent solution in line with the UN resolutions. Any other course — manipulated and rigged elections or repression by the security forces — will only complicate the situation, defy the will of the people for peaceful coexistence and drain the meagre resources of south Asia's two *most important neighbours. The future will* not hold any better prospects if the genuine political aspirations of the people of Kashmir are suppressed by force and distorted in the media kaleidoscope.

Publication of such a distorted version of the Kashmiri people's struggle for freedom does little credit to the high objective and impartial journalistic *standards* for which *Al-Ahram Weekly* is revered and respected.

Shakil Akhtar
Press counsellor,
Embassy of Pakistan
Cairo

Employee agony

Sir- I refer to the complaint of Dr Hebatallah El-Qamari published in the Arabic *Al-Ahram* of 5 August. *I am eager to de*fend this complaint with an offered public apology and hopefully provide a reason for the lack of wisdom, bad manners and weakness in the part of my country's representatives.

The debauchery of historical imperialism cannot be blamed for postmodern arrogance; this is a well-known disease which appears in the tidal wave of changed social and educational values. It is the Downs' Syndrome of yesterday's spoilt children living a life of resentment against the laws of disciplinary doctrine promoted by early wisdom.

In essence, Dr Hebatallah, you have fallen victim to what is called the "Dame Folly" disease: an attack on human dignity by the misguided behaviour of some foolish act. *You contrived to treat discriminately* the power of dominance, which, although it closely resembles imperialism, has to be identified with a new psychological pattern of diminished responsibility now sweeping our globalised world. Arrogance is not specific to the British civil service: its malignant form can be found in the wider *spectrum of pluralistic* values inside and outside borderless zones or guest/host combinations under the same united charter. The human mind cannot be enshrined in a person who sets a barrier on any one side of unboundable empire. There is no such thing as "our great nation"! The Greeks failed in this, the Romans did too, and cer*tainly the Brits failed in it.*

So take heart, Dr Hebatallah; when you hear the echoed chant of self-praise, this is a mark of insecurity attacking some prejudicial threat and certainly a weakness in the sub-conscious. I trust by now you have obtained your well earned visa and learned the lesson: "Diplomatic service begins and *ends with commercialism, and who dares* bite the hand that feeds them?"

Dr JW Wood
Beaumont,
Raphael Literary
Arts Foundation

The unbearable silence of being

By Leila Husseini

It will be difficult to forget Diana's and Dodi's deaths. The images are indelibly imprinted on our minds: the incessant, nerve-wrenching press coverage, the never-ending lines of Brits carrying flowers, condolences and tears from Kensington to Buckingham palace, the heated debates about the paparazzi, drunk drivers and potential conspirators *to enlighten our understanding of a reality recreated* and shaped for us on the screen; the touching images of the French physician trying in vain to save Diana's life, the glamorous Diana touch*ing a leper's hand, the wealthy* Dodi smoking an expensive cigar on his multi-million dollar yacht, and the most memorable (and expensive) photo — the famous kiss on the yacht... rich, beautiful, happy, *their mystique a reality the media created for us* and impressed on us. They will be remembered.

I too remember other images of the night I learned of their fatal accident. The images are indelibly imprinted on my mind; that same night, some three hundred Algerians — real people like you and me — three hundred human beings, mostly women and children, were brutally slaughtered, decapitated, mutilated, their bodies savagely burned, or their heads cynically placed on their doorsteps, a mere 25 kilometres from the capital, Algiers, in the village of Rais.

No extensive, omnipresent press coverage followed the massacre, no lines of tearful individuals, no debates on the violence permeating Algerians' daily lives, no encounters of doctors trying to save the wounded, in fact nobody, not a sight even of any security forces trying to intervene, to stop the massacre that reportedly took four hours. The dead, just ordinary people, neither rich nor famous, reduced to a statistic, 300 — an abstract number without a face, without an identity, anonymous, devoid of humanity.

The most intolerable aspect of that massacre is the lack of reaction, the absence of response from the world community. While we are *informed of the killings* by the global media, the slaughter is merely a parenthesis among so many other events, a statistic. The anonymous number neither moves nor touches us, the human dimension of the carnage escapes us, the cold statistic is unrelated to our lives. So the Algerian victims will not be remembered, nor will the incessant *violence in Algeria — the unspeakable tragedy* is met only by silence.

The media's voyeuristic obsession with celebrities will continue; are the media, however, responding to what is really important in the world? Or do they control us to the extent of determining our reality, establishing our priorities based on fame and privilege and deciding who and what ultimately matters?

The silence of the Algerian massacre speaks louder than solemn funeral *marches*, louder than *frenzied* debates over paparazzi and the mores of British royalty, and yet nobody seems to hear.

The writer is an Algerian development consultant resident in Cairo.


photo: Sherif Sonbol

Walid Aouni's *The Desert of Shadi Abdel-Salam*

Mind the sand

David Blake tangles with flying apparitions

The Desert of Shadi Abdel-Salam. Cairo Opera Dance Theatre. Director Walid Aouni: Cairo Opera House: 2 September

The Aouni desert piece was here some months ago for a few disturbing performances. Shadi Abdel-Salam is now an accredited Egyptian myth, along with Cleopatra, the Mohamed Ali dynasty, and a lot more. It is possible to take your pick of these myths. I knew Shadi. I — not. Everyone in theatre-land, cinema and merely society seems to have known him, and here again, in 1997, is his *Desert*. Was Shadi totally elusive? Is he in his new desert?

Deserts are very special. Like high mountains — Everest — vast ice space — the Antarctic — they pullulate with myths and heroic disasters which make an inevitable appeal to mythologically obsessed societies like ours.

Deserts are loved by warriors, adventurers, poets and just plain people who go out into them and never come back — the perfect mythic ending, the inexplicable disappearance, the disembodiment, as with Rimbaud. And socially, hostesses adore desert wanderers — mirage, all of it. Deserts have obsessed the northern races who now have ancient knights of empire, writing and fattening on how to live the lean and hungry life of the desert.

Where was Shadi's desert? In the mind? Did it exist at all? Or did he create it from something more riveting and powerful than reality? This being the second showing of *The Desert*, it is best to add that it is not Homeric. It is a brief, drastically pruned short work, spaced out into three movements inspired by different works by Shadi. The first movement, "Tutankhamon's Chair", of which we saw plenty in the previous version, is now transmuted and arranged to suggest, so it seems, a character. The second section, "The Eloquent Peasant" — a self-reflexive commentary on the work in progress, moving along haltingly towards its own difficult realisation. The third section is "Night of Counting the Years": excerpts from the film, balletically footnoted, though more conjectures than footnotes.

That is how it is laid out. From *Agatha* onwards, Aouni has been involved in a process of self-quotation which has grown with the years difficult to keep track of. Sound — is it always music? It seems so, and we must stick to "seems". Actual music is sound, noises, and there are plenty of these during the performance. The musical triad: sound, Ahmed Abbas; composer, Tarek Sharara; music, Vangilis. The sounds are often extremely sensitive, in fact the only things that give a sense of place.

Aouni has brilliant facets to present, often embedded in well-meant, sincere but unclear intentions. It is never clear what the desert is in the new ballet. A place — sands, space, the dream of a life or the life of a dream. They are different states which the composer must face. It would be exciting for Aouni to work with a leading contemporary composer, someone who has emerged from the classical chrysalis like himself.

His sense of atmosphere is infallible. And he uses silence as a thing existing. But so much merely seems. He gives the impression of being afraid of being ordinary, vulgar or straight-forward. The theatre, spoken, sung or shouted, is about these things. They are part of humanity. Aouni prefers the metaphysical. Probably his admirers do, too, but most viewers would appreciate guidance through his spaces. And this work is a space and that's about what it is, because it leaves no Ariadne thread to guide us through the maze of Shadi's mind. A desert is not much help. Over the dunes and far away is not enough.

Mohamed Shafik as Shadi Abdel-Salam fulfils all the deeds put upon him by Aouni's choreography. Shafik is an old hand at making the often withheld body actions invented for him full of suspense. Can a dancer merely fall over? Not Shafik, who glides and darts like a night insect through his balletic narrations. Ahmed Abdel-Aziz is another such dancer. The two dancers bind the steps together. And the cast, as always in these myth pieces, are first rate, helping to give *Desert* its authentic flavour. Aouni belongs on the Cairo Opera stage. He loves it and understands its uniqueness.

If you need suspense, detachment and large areas in which to think, and *Desert* is still on, it is good to see it while it lasts, because desert flowers don't bloom for long.

Cairo Symphony Orchestra; Master Symphony 1; Conductor Ahmed El-Saedi; Cairo Opera House, Main Hall, 6 September

Beginning: Debussy's *Prelude a l'Apres-midi d'un Faune*. Two harps open this piece. It is not afternoon — it is night, even after midnight in this version. And nothing sleepy. The gorgeous, erotic ooze of other days is gone over the ocean.

Fauns are young things, mostly male, some with a bit of goat added. Goats are sweet, settle for goats in your faun for the evening. This one is in black latex trousers, a black shirt and hat. Hats in the night are not run of the mill clothes for fauns. There's no forest here. It's a boulevard in some city. No grass or trees. But it shines. Nothing sleeps here. There's commotion. They're shooting dogs further up the boulevard. Fauns next, so there's no time left. And so El-Saedi, with a slice of tone created by the harps, goes into this classic old piece like a jack-knife. Welcome home to Cairo. The faun is slim, fine. How he got here no one knows but Debussy and El-Saedi.

This faun music is very historical. It slithered into fame as a snippet of ballet for Nijinski. Impressionism in music had begun. What followed is a long, noisy story. Tonight's faun was bright, steely-sharp and revealing. There is a lot more composition to it than merely slow slither. Not even erotic, but sharp-edged and expressive of something else: survival. They are not shooting dogs at the other end of the boulevard, they are shooting themselves, and so the faun frisks off, happy for the night.

Symphony No. 41 in C major K551, the "Jupiter", belongs in the work of Mozart with the piano concerto *No. 21 K467* in a special, celestial category. You could always reach heaven quite easily when you hear either of these works. The "Jupiter" is well-named in the Greek sense of gods as men — witty, amusing, softly alluring then melancholy-haughty, totally disarming but returning to gather up a poor mortal in need of high spirits in armfuls of joy.

Jupiter of Goethe: no more words necessary. What happened to the orchestra? Was El-Saedi pleased to return to his Cairo band again? Who were these people gathered together, freshly singing through each movement? They bent the work into the true classical shape and ended with the final *vivace* in a flourish of speed and energy that took away the air but brought again fresh air from other places only music knows how. Down here we do not know the answer. So the classic thing wins again. It has its meaning even in the '90s.

After this we were offered the 5th Symphony of Beethoven, well-named a master-symphony and a hard-working title. The Cairo Symphony Orchestra made a new season's debut with very spirited playing and fine-spun tone. This work through its four long movement showed the orchestra to be able to offer colour, change and clear build-ups to big moments, and all with pulsing speed. The trouble with this outlook — clarity above all — is that it robs the orchestra of something the listener has a right to expect. No matter the interpretation, it needs the good old, rich, warm Beethoven tone. It is a glow of warmth, a surge and a sense of listener belonging with orchestra. This the performance lacked.

The plan and the set-out were all fine, but no glow. Leaving the concert at the finish, listeners were assailed by the groans, grunts and jungle screams of music from the Experimental Theatre Festival as beings in rags flung themselves to the dust. At least there were Mozart and Jupiter with the Cairo Symphony to bolster their spirits.

Cinema

A bit of a carve-up?

Sexual sensationalism or feminist manifesto? **Khairiya El-Beshlawi** saw *El-Mar'a Wel-Satour* and found a film whose moral confusions detracted from its many qualities

El-Mar'a Wel-Satour (The Woman and the Cleaver) is based on a true story. It relates how a woman is led to commit murder by a husband who has deprived her of everything, both materially and spiritually, and has sexually abused both her and her only daughter. Unable to bear it any longer, she finally kills her tormentor, chops his body into pieces and scatters them across the rubbish dumps of Alexandria where they overlook the sea.

The writer-director, Said Marzouk, uses this real-life premise to pose a question about the nature of justice. Who is the real murderer in this case — the abused wife, or the husband who ends up paying with his life for the atrocities he has committed? The question is an important one, and the answer it receives here has a definite feminist slant. The portrayal of the victimised woman is unmistakably sympathetic, and the final frames insist upon her relative innocence, as reflected in the sentence that is finally passed upon her. But Marzouk seems to have had a double motive in choosing this subject, which allows him to combine ethical investigation with the kind of sensationalism that is essential in any film aspiring to blockbuster status. Sensationalism and morality make awkward — if predictable — bed-fellows. The result is a film that fails to deliver all it promises.

Not that the film is without qualities — far from it. Above all, it offers the actors a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate their expressive powers in scenes that often verge on the hysterical. Nabila Ebeid certainly delivers the goods as the vicitim-turned-murderess, crafting a highly-charged performance, yet never alienating the viewer's sympathies. Abu Bakr Ezzat, cast against type as the husband, amply merited his Best Actor Award from the 1996 Cairo International Film Festival. There is also a strong supporting cast, of whom Abdel-Moneim Madbouli as the good Christian who falls victim to the bad Muslim particularly deserves to be singled out.

This fine acting is well caught by Marzouk's sensitive direction. He makes eloquent use of long-shots, focusing on apparently random scenes, hovering above the natural landscape, and creating leitmotifs which resonate with the story and amplify its emotional impact. As a result, the film is able to create a sense of suspense through purely cinematic means, even for an audience that is already familiar with the story.

This is just as well, since narrative structure is not the film's strong point. It may be based on a true story, but despite the actors' best efforts, it fails to make the story *seem* true. The plotting is full of fatal loopholes, and the scenario positively teems with off-the-peg psychopaths, some of whom seem to exist only in order to elicit unpleasant laughter at the expense of their disabilities. Worst of all, the husband himself is so crudely characterised, his truth as a human being so perverted in the attempt to portray his perversions, that the final message of the film becomes a foregone conclusion long before the end.

The moral function of the wife's character is undermined, too, despite a greater appearance of psychological realism, by a host of details which predestine her as a victim. Her various weaknesses, moral and otherwise, while making her appear more "normal", more human, also serve to neutralise the ethical ambiguities which should provide the film's main interest. Had it not been for the director's ability to sustain a certain cinematic suspense through tempo and digression, the lack of any moral suspense would have led, inevitably, to a boredom no amount of physical and emotional violence could relieve.

Events unfold along two parallel narrative lines, in a time sequence characteristic of the whodunnit plots of which Marzouk is a past master, interweaving events and flashbacks with the wife's confessions. However, this device creates problems of coherence, as many of the sequences in the confessional flashbacks concern events which the murderess did not and could not have witnessed, and for which her only possible source is her husband. This inconsistency creates a narrative complicity that reinforces the viewer's sense of the woman as the man's natural, almost necessary victim.

Doubtless it is this sense of the woman's dependency on the man that provides the ideal formula for a box-office hit. But it also undermines the film's ethical pretensions and detracts from the proto-feminist message which it seeks to put across.

These weaknesses aside, "The Woman and the Cleaver" is nevertheless a distinguished piece of work, employing a highly developed cinematic vocabulary. Mohsen Nasr's cinematography is a joy to watch; Rageh Daoud's score is highly effective at stirring the emotions; and Said El-Sheikh's editing gives a compulsive rhythm to this flawed but fascinating thriller.

Listings

EXHIBITIONS

Takeyoshi Tanuma (Photographs)
El-Hanager, Opera House grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Opening: 12 Sept, 7pm. Daily 10am-10pm. 13-21 Sept.
Exhibited under the title Children of the Planet Earth, the photographs are of children from 106 countries to which the photographer travelled.

World Press Photographs
Opera House gallery, *Opera House grounds (in front of the Small Hall). Daily 10am-10pm. Until 20 Sept.*
Outstanding photos taken during the period of Sept 1996 - August 1997.

Group Exhibition
Italian Cultural Centre, *3 Sheikh El-Marsafi, Zamalek. Tel 340 8791. Opening: 13 Sept 7pm. Daily exc Fri & Sat., 10am-12pm & 6pm - 8pm.*
Inspired by Ariosto's Orlando Furioso, Irina Ionesco, Pino Chimenti, Angelo Canevari and Amal Maatouk exhibit photographs, mixed media works, sculptures, and paintings, respectively, under the title Women, Knights, Weapons and Love Stories.

Gamal Gad Mleika
Exhibition Hall, Al-Ahram Building, El-Galaa St, Boulaq. Tel 5786100. Daily 9am-10pm.
Recent paintings and sculpture by an Egyptian artist now resident in Italy.

Milton Glaser
Sony Gallery, Main Campus, American University in Cairo, Mohamed Mahmoud St. Tel 357 5424. Daily exc Fri & Sat, 9am-12pm & 6pm-9pm. Until 15 Sept.
Posters and book covers, store designs and toy creations, magazine formats and logotypes are on display at the artist's first exhibition in the Middle East.

Valparaiso
Cervantes Institute for Spanish Culture, Alexandria annex. 101 El-Horreya Avenue, Alexandria.
An exhibit of lithographs, postcards and photographs.

Collective Exhibition
Espace Gallery, 1 El-Sherifein St, Downtown. Tel 393 1699. Daily 10am-2pm & 6pm-9pm; Fri 6pm-9pm. Until 20 Sept.
A retrospective display of works by Assem Sharaf, Dina El-Gharib, Hassaan Ali Ahmed, Hazem El-Mestekawi, Hisham El-Zeini, Hussein Sharif, Mohamed Abdel-Moneim, Omar El-Fayoumi and Sherif Abdel-Badie, all of whom held exhibitions at the gallery during the last season.

Group Show
Donia Gallery, 20 Abdel-Aziz Gawish St, Doctors' Tower, 4th floor, Bab El-Louq. Tel 355 8367. Daily 12pm-10pm. Until 30 Sept.
Works by Hamed Nada, Adham Wanli, Hosny El-Banani, Seif Wanli, Fatma Rifaat, Mohamed Nagui and Zakaria El-Zeini among others.

Summer Collection
Khan El-Maghraby Gallery, 18 El-Mansour Mohamed St, Zamalek. Tel 340 3349. Daily exc Fri, 10.30am-2pm & 5pm-10pm. Until the end of Sept.
Works by Tahiya Halim, Abdel-Wahab Morsi, Salem Salah, George Bahgouri, Hassan Abdel-Fattah, among others.

Group Exhibition
Mashrabiya Gallery, 8 Champollion St, Downtown. Tel 578 4494. Daily 5pm-10pm. Until the end of Sept.
Works by over 20 artists, including George Bahgory, Mohamed Abla, Salah Hassouna, Xavier Puigmarti, Esmat Dawistashi and Aziz El-Hihi.

George Bahgory

Suzanne Mubarak Children's Museum
34 Abu Bakr El-Seddiq St, Heliopolis. Tel 249 9915. Daily exc Mon, 9am-2pm.

The Museum of Mr and Mrs Mohamed Mahmoud Khalil
1 Kafour El-Akhshid St, Dokki. Tel 336 2376. Daily exc Mon, 10am-6pm.
Egypt's largest collection of nineteenth century European art, amassed by the late Mahmoud Khalil and his wife, includes works by Courbet, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Rodin and a host of impressionist works, housed in the villa once belonging to the Khalils and converted into a museum with little, if any, expense spared. There are also a number of excellent orientalist works.

Egyptian Museum
Tahrir Sq, Downtown. Tel 575 4319. Daily exc Fri, 8am-5pm; Fri 9am-11.15am & 1pm-3pm.
The world's largest collection of Pharaonic and Ptolemaic treasures, including massive granite statues and the smallest household objects used by the Ancient Egyptians, along with, of course, the controversial mummies room. A perennial must.

Coptic Museum
Mar Girgis, Old Cairo. Tel 362 8766. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11am & 1pm-3pm.
Founded in 1910, the museum houses a distinguished collection of Coptic art and artefacts, including textiles, manuscripts, icons and architectural features in a purpose built structure in the heart of the Coptic city. Elegant, airy, and with pleasant garden café.

Islamic Museum
Port Said St, Ahmed Maher St, Bab El-Khalq. Tel 390 9930/390 1520. Daily exc Fri, 9am-4pm; Fri 9am-11.30am & 2pm-4pm.
A vast collection of Islamic arts and crafts including *mashrabiya*, lustreware ceramics, textiles, woodwork, coins and manuscripts drawn from Egypt's Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluke periods and from other countries in the Islamic world.

Museum of Modern Egyptian Art
Opera House Grounds, Gezira. Tel 340 6861. Daily exc Mon, 10am-1pm & 5pm-9pm.
A permanent display of paintings and sculpture charting the modern art movement in Egypt from its earliest pioneers to latest practitioners. A state of the art museum housing the contemporary art of the state.

Mohamed Nagui Museum
Château Pyramids, 9 Mahmoud Al-Guindi St, Giza.
A museum devoted to the paintings of Mohamed Nagui (1888-1956), the Alexandrian aristocrat who is considered one of the pioneers of the modern Egyptian art movement.

Mahmoud Mukhtar Museum
Tahrir St, Gezira. Daily exc Sun and Mon, 9am-1.30pm.
A permanent collection of works by the sculptor Mahmoud Mukhtar (d. 1934), whose granite monument to Saad Zaghloul stands near Qasr El-Nil Bridge, and whose Egypt Awakening became, somewhat belatedly, an icon of post revolutionary Egypt.

FILMS

Russian Films
Pushkin Centre for Russian Culture. 127 El-Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 360 6371.
Russian and Egyptian film screenings every Monday at 7pm.

Commercial cinemas change their programmes every Monday. The information provided is valid through to Sunday after which it is wise to check with the cinemas. Arabic films are seldom subtitled. For information, contact the venue.

Double Team
Karim II, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 592 4830. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm.
With Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dennis Rodman and Mickey Rourke.

El-Masir (Le Destin)
Karim I, 15 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 591 6095. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Normandy, 31 El-Ahram St, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0254. Daily 12.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. El-Haram, El-Haram St, Giza. Tel 385 8358. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. El-Salam, 65 Abdel-Hamid Badawi St, Heliopolis. Tel 293 1072. Daily 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Tahrir, 112 Tahrir St, Dokki. Tel 335 4726. Daily 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm. MGM, Kolleyat El-Nasr Sq, Maadi. Tel 352 3066. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Odeon I, Abdel Hamid Said St., Downtown. Tel 575 8797.
Youssef Chahine's latest mega-production, starring Nour El-Sherif, Leila Elwi, Mahmoud Hemeida, Safeiya El-Emari and a large, young, aesthetically pleasing cast.

Liar Liar
Ramsis Hilton I, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight.
For one day attorney Jim Carrey can only tell the truth.

The Saint
Metro, 35 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 393 3897. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Ramsis Hilton II, Corniche El-Nil St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 1.30pm, 330pm, 6.30pm, 9.30pm & midnight.
With Val Kilmer and Elisabeth Shue.

El-Mar'a Wel-Satour (The Woman and the Cleaver)
Cosmos I, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Miami, 38 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 574 5656. Daily noon, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Roxy, Roxy Sq, Heliopolis. Tel 258 0344. Daily 10am, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Rivoli II, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm. Tiba I, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 1am, 3pm, 6.pm & 9.pm. Sphinx, Sphinx Sq, Mohandessin. Tel 346 4017. Daily 8pm.
Nabila Ebeid's latest venture involves the hacking to pieces of men.

Ismailia Rayeh Gaey (Ismailia Back and Forth)
Rivoli I, 26 July St, Downtown. Tel 575 5053. Daily 1pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm 8pm & 10pm. Tiba II, Nasr City. Tel 262 9407. Daily 1am, 3pm, 6.pm & 9pm. Cosmos II, 12 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 779 537. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Diana Palace, 17 El-Alfi St, Emadeddin, Downtown. Tel 924 727. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Odeon III, Abdel-Hamid Said St, Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm. Lido, 23 Emadeddin St, Downtown. Tel 934 284. Daily 10am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm & 9pm. Cairo Sheraton, El-Galaa St, Giza. Tel 360 6081. Daily 10.30am, 1pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm & midnight.
With Hanan Tork, Khaled El-Nabawi, Mohamed Heneidi and singer Mohamed Fouad.

'Awdat El-Ebn El-Dall (Return of the Prodigal Son)
Odeon II, Abdel Hamid Said St., Downtown. Tel 575 8797. Daily 10.30am, 1.30pm, 3.30pm, 6.30pm & 9.30pm.
Directed by Youssef Chahine, the film stars Hesham Selim, Mahmoud El-Meligui and Magda El-Roumi.

MUSIC

Pops 1
Gomhouriya Theatre, *12 Gomhouriya St. Tel 391 9956. 13 Sept, 9pm.*
The Cairo Symphony Orchestra, with conductor Mostafa Nagi and soloists Omar Khairat (piano) and Sobhi Bedair (tenor) perform works by Omar Khairat and Ahmed El-Saedi

Pantalone and Colombine
Gomhouriya Theatre, *as above. 14 & 15 Sept, 9pm.*
The Teatro Immagine present a pantomime to music by Mozart played by the Archicembalo Ensemble of Venice.

Le Voyageur Immobile
Main Hall, *Opera House, Gezira. Tel 341 2926. 12 & 13, Sept 9pm.*
The French Philippe Genty Company perform.

Jazz
Main Hall, *Opera House, as above. 14 & 17 Sept, 9pm.*
The Swiss George Gruntz Concert Jazz Band perform.

Jazz Recital
Small Hall, *Opera House, as above. 12 Sept, 9pm.*
Yehia Khalil and his band perform.

Violin and Piano Recital
Small Hall, *Opera House, as above. 13 Sept, 9pm.*
Ivan Pavlov and Dalia El-Leithy, soloists.

THEATRE

Nehru in Egyptian Eyes & The Lost Letter
Indian Cultural Centre, 23 Talaat Harb Street. 11 Sept, 7pm

Bahlool Fi Istanbul
Hilton Ramsis Theatre, Hilton Ramsis annex, El-Galaa St. Tel 574 7435. Daily 10pm exc Fri, 8.30pm
With Samir Ghanem, Elham Shahin and Bothayna Rashwan.

Mama America
Qasr El-Nil Theatre, Qasr El-Nil St. Tel 575 0761. Sat & Sun 10pm, Mon 8pm.
Starring and directed by Mohamed Sobhi.

'A'elat Wanis (Wanis' Family)
Qasr El-Nil Theatre, as above Weds & Thurs, 10pm, Fri 8pm
Directed by Mohamed Sobhi and starring all the family members of the televised series.

El-Zaim (The Leader)
El-Haram Theatre, Pyramids Road, Giza. Tel 386 3952. Daily 10pm; Fri & Mon 8.30pm.
With Adel Imam; directed by Sherif Arafa.

Ballo (Fanfare)
Madinet Nasr Theatre, Youssef Abbas St, Nasr City. Tel 402 0804. Daily 10pm; Fri & Mon 8.30pm.
A large crowd including Mahmoud El-Guindi, Salah El-Saadani, Sameh Anwar and Ashraf Abdel-Baqi and a contingent of Russian ballet dancers; directed by Samir El-Asfouri.

Cromb, Zabadi (Cabbage, Yogurt)
Radio, 24 Talaat Harb St, Downtown. Tel 575 6562. Daily 10pm, exc Mon & Fri, 8pm
Sayed Saleh, Ahmed Bedeir and legendary dancer Nagwa Fouad, directed by Essam El-Sayed

Ta'm El-Kalam (The Taste of Words)
El-Talia, Ataba Square, Downtown. Tel 937 948. From 12 Sept. Daily 10pm
Abdullah Mahmoud, Farouk Naguib and Manal Salama, directed by Hossam El-Din Saleh

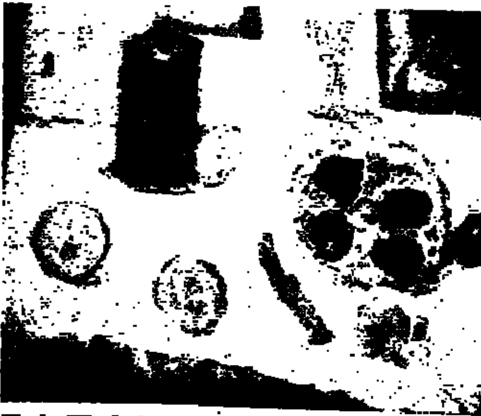
Leila Foll (Jasmine Night)
Floating Theatre, Adjacent to University Bridge, Manial. Tel 364 9516. From 12 September. Daily exc Tues. 10pm.
Mahmoud El-Alfi directs Ola Rami, Emad Rashad, Mohamed Farid and singer Ahmed Ibrahim in a light musical.

All information correct at time of going to press. However, it remains wise to check with venues first, since programmes, dates and times are subject to change at very short notice.
Please send information to Listings, *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Galaa St, Cairo Tel 5786064.
Fax 5786089/833.

Compiled by **Injy El-Kashef**

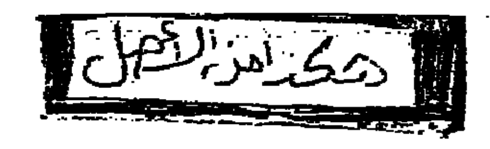
Around the galleries

ONE clear advantage of a visit to the centrally located **Atelier du Caire** (off of Talaat Harb Square) is that it hosts several exhibitions simultaneously. Currently on show there are works by **Hoda Khaled**, **Mohamed Tosson** and **Safiya Helmy**. Khaled's Cezannesque still lifes are daring in their use of colour, Tosson's calligraphic works are well designed while Helmy's exhibition, which consists of ceramics, paintings and engravings, are experimental in their textilic approach to surface.


Hoda Khaled

Included in the Summer Collection on exhibit at **Khan Maghraby** are paintings by **George Bahgory** and **Afif Sharafawy**. Bahgory's studies of faces are highly expressive and moving while Sharafawy's pointillist landscapes and cityscapes manage at once to combine an organic sense of form and a decorative approach to surface.

Reviewed by **Nagwa El-Ashri**



Salt, spittle and sellotape

Nehad Selaiha gives a roundup of the first week of the Cairo International Experimental Theatre Festival

Imagine being *catapulted* from the bustling heart of the Edinburgh Festival — celebrating its 50th anniversary this year — into the thick of the Cairo International Experimental Theatre Festival (CIETF) and, still reeling, finding yourself in the unenviable position of having had thrust upon you the honour (or punishment) of sitting on the panel of international jurors. The position carries many disadvantages, *not least of* which is having to submit to being ferried to the various venues in an imposing fleet of gigantic black 1975 Chevrolets manned by manic drivers. Rumour has it that each year, an envoy is *sent into the* time-machine to produce these prestigious vehicles, dubbed by one young Egyptian theatre director 'the Ninja Turtles', and by myself 'the tanks'. This ferrying about would have been intolerable *but for the* presence, among the passengers, of a homogenous group of wonderful women — partners in crime — whose warm and witty company lightened many a miserable hour.

More *serious* disadvantages, apart from the major ordeal of having to work out, even tentatively a definition of the 'experimental' in the presence of so many different cultural backgrounds include having to see what you would not normally choose to see, having to sit through many a dull show right through to the end, missing interesting shows playing on the fringe and foregoing the pleasure of airing your views in public. This explains my silence last week. However, since this article comes out on the day of the closing ceremony, when the awards are announced, this constraint no longer applies.

So far, 8 September, out of the 27 productions viewed by the jury, very few merit notice. This is somewhat surprising, in view of the fact that this year, Fawzi Fahmi, the *chairman of the festival, commis*sioned a three-member 'pre-selection' international committee to preview all the works submitted to the festival (in video format) and choose the ones that de*serve to be entered in the* competition. The committee (which included John Elsom, the distinguished British theatre critic, Ricard Salvat, the director of the Association of Investigation and Experimental Theatre in Spain, and prominent French director and member of the International Institute of Mediterranean Theatre Richard Martin) sifted through more than 60 works, excluded nearly half of them and graded the other half into three categories. For some vexingly inscrutable reason, the productions in all three categories were entered in the competition — perhaps to test the stamina *of the jury. One member, Linda Fitzsimmons from the* UK, announced that when she goes back home, she will take up mathematics, while another, the renowned Lebanese actress and director Nedal Al-Ashqar, suspects a conspiracy to put her off theatre for life. To make the jury's task more onerous and unwieldy some countries were allowed to compete with more than one production (Austria brought three and Romania two), while the Arab countries for obvious diplomatic reasons were exempted from the pre-selection process altogether, with the result that the number of entries swelled up to 35, now 34 after Ghana's withdrawal.

It beats me why the governments of some countries where theatre is still in its nascent stage insist, year af*ter year, on being in the competition, regarding* this as a mark of prestige. This situation can be easily avoided if CIETF becomes an independent organisation with the freedom to make its own artistic decisions untrammelled by political considerations and the resources to bring to Egypt the best that is available on the world experimental theatre market. If this happens, it will automatically put paid to any arguments in favour of the competition, and the artists in the theatrically budding countries will have a far more productive and enjoyable experience — performing, watching and interacting — than merely spending their time worrying and fretting about the awards. But until this happens, the poor members of the jury have to put up with a lot of pretentious rubbish, expensively *packaged, labelled and promoted* as theatre.

In experimental theatre, a very fluid and relative concept, I have always maintained that the production that raises the most controversy is usually the most experimental, if not the best. *One such show is the Aus*tralian *Descent* which, unfortunately for the Chapel of Change troupe, was chosen to play at the opening ceremony. I say unfortunately, because it is an image-based poetic movement work with a strong core of ritual that requires concentration and a more intimate performance space than the Main Hall of the Opera House in order to produce its hypnotic impact. The audience of the festival's opening night are usually there for the occasion rather than for theatre and expect a lighter form of entertainment that allows for a lot of *side chatting*. My heart went out the two performers, Rainsford (author and director of the work) and Mary Salem (first generation Australian with a Lebanese father and an Egyptian mother), as the audience, growing more and more disgruntled by the absence of thrills and frills, began a positively uncivilised chorus of derisive clapping and loud, artificial coughing; when somebody tried to shush them, they took up the 'shush' as their new comic refrain and the theatre became a virtual wind chamber for several minutes. Having left my consigned seat in the orchestra pit among the jury and moved to the stalls to get a better view, I was forced to change my place three times in order to escape the loud and sickly humourous com*ments of my neighbours*. Nevertheless, *The Descent*, perhaps because of its central archetypal theme, the journey and the quest for wholeness and salvation, its original set which required 75 kilogrammes of fine table-salt to carpet the stage in addition to the soft clouds of powder, its slow, sculpted choreography which took the mystical circle as its motif, and drew, together with the costumes and the disturbingly haunting soundtrack on several oriental and Middle Eastern traditions (including the Japanese Butho — a tragic, post-Hiroshima form of expression), managed to come across to many people in the audience and some members of the jury as well, as a highly disciplined and evocative work that harnesses universal archetypes and symbols to create stage metaphors of spir*itual longings and states of being. In an interview with* Hazem Azmi for the CIETF daily bulletin, Rainsford and Salem describe *The Descent* as a work designed for a small, intimate theatre and as one that "simply requires the audience to relax and go into a meditative state to allow the movement of the work to unfold". I did surrender myself quite voluntarily to the work and was richly rewarded. Nevertheless, I could not help feeling slightly uncomfortable at the play's central image of a male saviour, obviously allied with some religious or mystical powers, constantly leading a female novice who, in image after image, sheds her colourful clothing for the white of an initiate and follows — literally — in his footsteps to the accompaniment of male, religious (Alleluia-Amen) chanting. I may be totally wrong of course; but then this is the kind of risk that any show that puts the burden of interpretation largely on the audience usually runs.



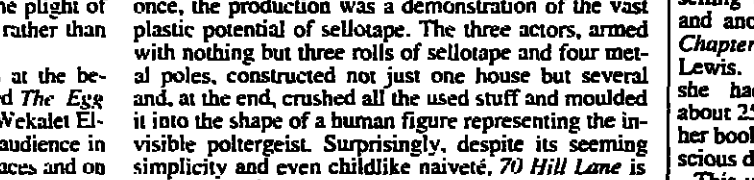
From left: *The Descent* (Australia) and *Atridis* (Greece)

After the Australian sea of salt, water figured prom*inently in the Romanian Queen and the central theme* was birth and death. The image of the Flood which drowns the world but leads to rebirth and the renewal of life was concretely present in the set which featured a barrel, brim-full of water, in the centre, flanked by a cot and a bier, and real water pouring down from pipes and spouts framing the stage of the Small Hall of the Opera House. Like fire, water has a strange, almost magical appeal on stage and in the case of *The Queen* it helped the audience swallow the verbal avalanche that poured non-stop from the two actors.

At the same venue, in the Italian *Aquarium*, water was once more the source of inspiration, providing the subject matter, the setting and the characters, and informing every visual and aural detail of the show. As if by magic, the small, glass aquarium which appears at the beginning, topped by a sea shell, against a blue backdrop, metaphorically expands to engulf the whole stage and we are imaginatively transported to the teeming underwater world. Three delightful young actors (Roberta Biagiarelli, Lilli Valcepina and Andrea Violato) take us on a fascinating tour of this world, introducing us to the funny side of the life of its inhabitants. The experience was like a thrilling imaginative leap — not just into the depths of *il mare, but also into the distant, fluid world of one's child*hood where nothing had a fixed definite identity, and the most ordinary and familiar of objects could be instantaneously metamorphosed into something else. The props and accessories thrilled the audience with their sheer inventiveness and managed, despite the open, undisguised theatricality of the performance, to achieve the imaginative, almost wizardly feat of uniting land and sea in a celebration of all forms of life.

Unfortunately, some critics incline to view suspiciously any work that does not come to them dressed up in layers upon layers of *angoisse* with an overcoat of gloom and doom. The colour, brightness and *joie de vivre* of a show like *Aquarium* would unsettle and distress them, and they are much better off *and more at home watching performances like the Tu*nisian *With Nothing* — a violent dance piece about the homeless and the sordidness and brutality of their lives. Here, quite fittingly, when water appeared it took the form of spittle shooting from the mouth of one actor to spatter the first ten rows. I would have forgiven the spitting if the work had been more than a pale imitation of some American works on the same theme. All the time I felt I was watching the plight of the homeless on the streets of New York, rather than on those of any recognisable Arab city.

More spitting came from the Bulgarians at the beginning of the production (curiously entitled *The Egg or Experimental Passing by Experiment*) at Wekalet El-Ghouri; and as if that was not enough, the audience in the first row had raw egg spattered in their faces and on their clothes at the end. Still, they forgave the actors because of their sincerity, ebullience and extreme youth. The show was as raw and runny as the raw eggs that *frame it at the beginning* and end. It *rumbled for a full* two hours, moving randomly and erratically from scene to scene, had about six false climaxes, and seemed fit to burst at the seams with the load of material stuffed into it. In short, it had all the merits and faults of a youthful first work. And despite its tiresome and sometimes positively irritating tendency to repeat itself and labour the point, it had some interesting, even moving sequences and some very funny spots. It was not a 'finished' work by any means, and often lacked subtlety and finesse; but it was daring and passionately exploratory and the whole performance communicated a sense of urgency. It may not be a 'good' show, but it is certainly experimental.



The Spanish-Venezualan *Medea* which sets the old revenge story in the context of the recent bloody war in Bosnia-Herzegovina proved a harrowing experience: every monstrous, barbaric and disgusting act in the book of humanity, including cannibalism, was performed here and the production seemed to take a positively sinister pleasure in wallowing in brutality. The heart-rending sobs and lamentations at the opening soon give way to a mood of violent rage, and the fury of the chorus of women transforms them from mourners to witches, amazons and blood-*sucking beasts. Nothing as innocent as spittle here:* when the women spit, it is vomit, venom and blood. After the performance, Linda Fitzsimmon declared that it had made her realise the wisdom of the Greeks in banishing all the violent sets backstage.

Compared to this *Medea*, the Greek *Atrides* seemed light and cheerful. The style of Yiannis Marearitis' production which strives to recapture the mode and methods of the Ancient Greek theatre gives the work an air of dignified restraint and profound pathos. What made it more effective and fascinating was the backdrop of the Sphinx and the Pyramids it was performed against. The choral chanting and the melodic declamations floated out into the surrounding desert, mingling with the sand and connecting the past with *the present.*

It was a welcome relief, nevertheless, to leave the gory chambers of Greek drama and move with the British entry to *70 Hill Lane* to meet the poltergeist ('Polty') who lives in the attic. Apart from the charming, funny narrative (recollections of childhood centring on the house, the family and Polty) which moves back and forth in time following several threads at once, the production was a demonstration of the vast plastic potential of sellotape. The three actors, armed with nothing but three rolls of sellotape and four metal poles, constructed not just one house but several and, at the end, crushed all the used stuff and moulded it into the shape of a human figure representing the invisible poltergeist. Surprisingly, despite its seeming simplicity and even childlike naiveté, *70 Hill Lane* is a profound piece that speaks to us indirectly, through the lighthearted chatter, about the transience and insubstantiality of life and the nature of memory, ex*perience and imagination.*

Two more entries deserve to be mentioned, *The Dissimulators* from the Shamans Physical Theatre Company established in Hungary by Eva Magyar in 1991, and the Austrian *Brainers* from the Tranz Hotel Troupe. Both are dance works (we have far too many in this festival) with excellent, imaginative choreography, executed with admirable proficiency, and innovative use of props.

This is not the end of the story, of course. Seven more entries remain to be seen and evaluated by the jury, and some of the productions playing on the fringe have excited a lot of interest among the critics and the public. But more of that later.

Of passion plays and puppets

This summer, Egyptian-American theatrical encounters ranked high on the agenda of the O'Neill Theatre Centre in Connecticut, writes **Holly Hill**

A group of Egyptian delegates were a tremendous success at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre Center, the 33-year old American institution which flew the flag of Egypt for the first time this summer. With long-standing ties to Russian, Chinese, European and Latin American professional and educational theatre organisations, the O'Neill welcomed five representatives of Egyptian theatre.

Lotfy El-Sayed, director of the Cairo Puppet Theatre, attended *the O'Neill National* Puppetry Conference in June; playwright Dr Sameh Mahran, assistant professor of Drama at the Faculty of Specific Education College, and Nasser Abdel-Moneim, artistic director of El-Tali'a Theatre, attended the National Playwrights Conference in July, and director Ashraf El-Nomani, assistant professor of Drama at the Academy of Arts, *came to* the National Music Theatre Conference in August. Acting as translator was Ms Dina Amin, a Cairene director who is currently a PhD candidate writing her dissertation on "Alfred Farag and Contemporary Egyptian Theatre" at the *Uni*versity of Pennsylvania. The Egyptian delegates inspired numerous Americans who had never heard of Arabic theatre in *general* or Egyptian theatre in particular to want to know much more, and to visit Cairo to see for themselves.

This felicitous connection between the O'Neill and Egypt is directly attributable to *Egyptian tourism*. I won a trip to Egypt at my church's charity auction in 1994, and like countless visitors over the centuries *fell completely in* love with the country and its people. As a journalist and academic, I pondered how I could get back, often, and find grant money to do it. I remembered being taught that the Osiris passion play was the beginning of theatre in the Mediterranean area, *pre-dating* Greek *drama* by some two thousand years. What had become of Egyptian drama since then, I wondered?

I posed this question to the one Egyptian colleague I knew, Dr Mohamed Bahaa, assistant professor of Drama at Zagazig University, who responded *generously* by *seeking* out and sending me English translations of many Arabic plays and books about Arabic theatre. I was astonished to learn of an artistic richness that few Amer*icans* have ever heard of. I appointed myself an unofficial ambassador, began taking Arabic classes at New York University, and called George White, founder and chairman of the O'Neill Theatre Center. White had never heard of Arabic theatre, either, and eagerly appointed me to act as the O'Neill's representative to bring the two theatre worlds together.



Lotfy El-Sayed with American puppeteer Jim Rose
photo: Catherine Ursillo

Egypt's *delegates* could not have given the O'Neill's Arabic Theatre Project a better sendoff during its 1997 conferences. Lotfy El-Sayed brought a paper on Egyptian puppetry and delighted an audience of fellow artists with excerpts from *El-Leila El-Kebira* (The Great Night), his *marionette* show featuring four of his creations (conference favourites were the splendidly arrayed horse and the gold-spangled belly dancer). In the show Lotfy had the help of a young Cairene puppeteer, Sherif El-Qatsha, who *is beginning his* career in New York film and television.

Artistic director of the National Playwrights' Conference, Lloyd Richards, intro*duced the Egyptians'* seminar to the conference by stating: "Egyptian theatre does not exist in our perception. That does not mean it doesn't exist, just that we don't know about it." And learn about Egyptian theatre the audience did. Dina Amin read a paper on "The History of Arabic and Egyptian theatre," and translated as Sameh Mahran read his "On the Sociological and Economic Background of Egyptian Theatre" and Nasser Abdel-Moneim his "Egyptian Theatre Today."

That night, as Lloyd Richards introduced the first public performance of a play at the conference, he said: "This year we have twelve plays, including ones from Russian and Norwegian playwrights. Next year we will have a play from Egypt." At a later meeting *with Richards, it was agreed that Mahran would write,* Abdel-Moneim direct with Dina Amin as assistant director and translator, and I would act as dramaturge for the play.

At the National Music Theatre Conference, Ashraf El-Nomani's abilities as pianist, singer and dancer thrilled the participants. He played an overture of Arabic music as they entered the theatre for his presentation, and performed three of his own and two other composers' songs for the group. In between songs, Dina Amin and I read El-Nomani's essay on "Egyptian Musical theatre."

In addition to their intellectual and artistic accomplishments, the Egyptians won over conference participants with their charm. Most of the puppeteers misread Lotfy El-Sayed's name tag and called him "Lofty", which he accepted with good grace.

After their presentations, the Egyptian delegates *were approached by numerous* writers, directors, musicians and actors wishing to collaborate with them on plays or musicals and to foster exchanges between themselves and Egyptian artists and educators.

The writer is professor of Theatre at John Jay College of the City University of New York and director of the Arabic Theatre Project at the O'Neill Theatre Center; she is also a member of the jury at the Cairo International Experimental Theatre Festival

Plain Talk

I do not know how many copyright agreements exist, but I believe there are more than one. This goes to show a lack of confidence among authors and publishers. In fact from time to time one hears or reads about cases of plagiarism and about one writer accusing another of lifting passages or even chapters from his work. Here in Egypt we have read lately about some university professors using complete sections of PhD candidates' theses and including them in books which they purport to be theirs.

The issue of plagiarism brings up many points which are worth discussing. One recent case is that of novelist Graham Swift who has been accused by an Australian professor of lifting the plot of his Booker Prize *winning* novel *Last Order* from William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. The novelist has been *defended by the international* literary world on the grounds that almost all good writers play the game of "echoes and reflections" with *their* predecessors. A Russian critic commented that all stories could be rendered down into one of the seven archetypes, with golden oldies such as *Cinderella* and *Romeo and Juliet* turning up time and again across centuries and continents.

Commenting on the debate, John Sutherland, professor of English at University College, London, says : "There is a distinction between the innocent and the guilty plagiarist. The innocent one falls into categories. There are the idiots, who can't tell the difference between *meum* and *teum*. There are the sloppy note-takers who forget the source of ideas. Then there are writers who possess photographic memory who unconsciously splice passages from other works into their own."

In an article published in the *Independent* Tabloid, Boyd Tomkin gives examples of these different kinds of plagiarists. He mentions the case of the Scottish poet Hugh McDiarmid who was accused of taking extracts from a prose story of the Welsh writer Rhys Davies and using it in his political and scientific epic *The Raised Beach*. The poet admitted the connection, but attributed the borrowing to his failure to record the source.

There are cases of what the writer calls pseudo-plagiarism. In 1955 critics suggested the similarities between P D James' best-*selling thriller Original Sin* and another thriller, *End of Chapter*, by Cecil Day-Lewis. James recalled that she had read the thriller about 25 years before writing her book, but denied any conscious debt to it.

This unconscious plagiarist seems to be accepted by both writers and critics. True, one's experience derives both from one's actual personal experiences and from reading. Books may be regarded as second-hand experience, but there is no doubt that they help enrich one's life. There is a case of *two modern writers who used* the same elements in their plots. It turned out that they had never read each other's books, but their inspiration came from the same source, which was a work by Mrs. Gaskell who died in 1865.

Boyd Tonkin writes about the "completely innocent plagiarist who accumulates references from works by other writers and in an unconscious way reproduces them". But real plagiarists often manage to get away with their literary larcenies. They often seem to expect exposure and condemnation. There is a need, Tonkin thinks, in some plagiarists to "be unmasked and then confess. It is some kind of *mea culpa* as a sort of *transferred attempt to expiation*."

Some cases of plagiarism went to court. Some even claim that "my insistence on ownership was a denial of the communal nature of art". There is also a tendency in the contemporary intellectual climate which "belittles originality as a Romantic myth *and hails* instead the emergent culture of clones and multiples".

Whatever the case may be, there is no doubt that writers have every right to safeguard their literary property. To those *who* claim that there is nothing new under the sun, one can say that this may be true, but there are different ways of dealing with these age-old things, and this is where the writer's originality lies.

Mursi Saad El-Din

A risky business



A national programme to deal with high-risk hospital waste is gradually being implemented to safeguard the nation's health — inside and outside hospitals, writes Sherine Nasr

For more than 20 years, *Amm* Ramadan, a garbage collector, has been collecting waste from Qasr El-Aini hospital, to the tune of almost seven tons per day, and dumping it in Ain El-Sira, one of Cairo's largest waste disposal pits, just south of the city.

Much of his load may be toxic, but he wears no protective clothing and leaves it in huge rubbish tips, where it is treated as ordinary garbage.

The issue of how to dispose of hazardous hospital waste more safely has become a matter of concern in Egypt and steps are being taken to solve the problem.

In 1995, the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) and the Danish government set up a National Health Care Waste Management Programme for the environmentally-friendly disposal of hospital waste. This plan is being implemented, but there is still a long way to go.

"The programme addresses issues of how to collect, separate, temporarily store, transport and finally dispose of this infectious matter," explained Dr Gihad Abul-Atta, assistant professor of occupational and environmental medicine at Cairo University.

Hazardous hospital waste material includes blood transfusion kits, dressings, used cotton wool and syringes, in addition to scalpels and other blades.

"In a hospital like Qasr El-Aini, at least 10,000 needles are used per day," said Abul-Atta. In addition, body tissue, chemicals and drugs constitute a major health risk. An average of 1.2 to 2.8kg of waste, 40 per cent of which is infectious, is produced per bed per day. "The total volume of this high-risk waste is terrifying, as there are almost 110,000 beds in 18,000 hospitals nation-wide," said Abul-Atta. Add to that the waste generated by small-scale clinics now common in every district, the numbers of which are as yet unknown, where minor surgery can be performed.

Although it represents a clear threat to public health, after it leaves most of Cairo's hospitals, waste is taken to one of the major disposal sites in El-Muqattam or Ain El-Sira. "This procedure can have a detrimental effect on people's health in these dumping areas. Scientifically speaking, toxic waste, no matter how small the amount, can infect the whole area," said Abul-Atta.

The situation in other governorates is no better. Hospitals farm waste disposal tasks out to care service companies. "These companies have no experience in dealing with hospital waste, and consequently they treat it as ordinary household garbage," he said.

In the most extreme cases, used syringes are salvaged and sold to drug dealers or small-scale clinics by unscrupulous traders. Used cotton and other soft waste has even been used to stuff children's toys, seats or cushions.

"The stuff is handled without being sterilised. The consequences are simply disastrous," said Abul-Atta.

The way to put an end to such practices, Abul-Atta believes, is to provide a directory of all companies licensed to sell medical equipment so that all unknown sources can be banned.

Environmentally-friendly methods of waste disposal, many of which are expensive, include deep-level land filling, sterilisation and incineration. "The latter, though still expensive, is the method most likely to be used in Egypt," said Abul-Atta. Indeed, positive steps are being taken to introduce incinerators throughout the country.

Except for a very few hospitals which have their own incinerators, such as El-Salam International, Ain Shams and the new Qasr El-Aini, the majority still lack this facility. In some cases, waste, both hazardous and non-hazardous, is simply burnt in an open area. "Burning results in the emission of hydrocarbons which cause cancer and deformities," he explained. "Incineration turns these dangerous gases into carbon dioxide and water, which already exist in nature." Two healthcare management projects, currently underway in hospitals run by Cairo University and the Ministry of Health, have been launched with the help of the EEAA and the Danish government to aid in the introduction of incineration at these hospitals. With German technology, these incinerators are now being made locally.

The projects stress the importance of sorting the waste before disposal. "Separation at the source into hazardous and non-hazardous waste is the only means of minimising the cost of disposal," said Abul-Atta, adding that hospital administrations often believe mistakenly that waste disposal is cheap.

Forty-eight hospitals out of the 150 approached by the healthcare management projects have asked to participate in them actively. "Our aim is to establish an environmental auditing unit in each of these hospitals to be able to examine the different stages of waste disposal," he said. A series of workshops have also been held, where the causes of infection and general codes of practice concerning infection control and the disposal of toxic waste matter were discussed, and information posters and brochures were designed.

The process is slow, but there will come a time in the foreseeable future when *Amm* Ramdan will no longer have to carry his hazardous load, and those living near dumps will be less at risk of infections.



Unsung heroes

TRAVELLERS to Cairo have often described its streets as narrow, tortuous and dusty, completely lacking in pavements and choked by garbage. At various moments in the history of the city, attempts were made to promote the cleanliness of public thoroughfares, especially those through which traffic was heavy, like the old Qasaba (the central thoroughfare of Fatimid Cairo) and the principal *souqs*.

In many representations of European life in the middle ages, housewives are pictured with a broom in hand, energetically sweeping their doorsteps and sprinkling the footpaths with water. The performance of this daily chore, it ...ms, was never a popular Egyptian custom. ... it ever imported by the visitors to our ... one of the reasons fro the inhabitants' lack of interest in the cleanliness of their streets may have been the relative seclusion of women. It would have been improper for them to be observed on the street in their house clothes.

Whatever the reason, it was often necessary for the ruler to issue an edict ordering the removal of mountains of garbage which had grown so high as to completely block the passage in back lanes. The refuse, which could, then as now, rise several meters above the ground, was dug away, back down to the original level of the street. El-Maqrizi recorded several instances where such an order led to bouts of unusual activity on the occasion of some special celebration or the passage of important dignitaries. He also reports the story of the powerful *wali*, Dawlat Khuga, who lost the love of the people he ruled, when he forced shopkeepers to sweep the streets in front of their stores and sprinkle them with water.

With the modernisation of the cities, and the advent of carriages, then later automobiles, importance was given to paving the large avenues, which were sprayed with water, sometimes twice daily, by special sprinkler-trucks preceded by motor-powered street sweepers. As these expensive engines slowly succumbed to the injuries of time and poor maintenance, they were replaced once more in the '60s by municipality workers, who performed the thankless task of keeping our urban environment from drowning in the refuse we generate, rewarded with an inadequate salary and little, if any, public recognition.

A common sight in Cairo at rush hours is the green garbage cart of the street sweepers, dangerously parked at curbs, while the sweepers themselves, clad in faded orange overalls, nonchalantly wield their brooms, one eye on the traffic, hoping that motorists will be gridlocked long enough to hand them a tip. The same sweepers are sure to turn up on the doorsteps in affluent neighbourhoods on festive occasions to claim their "present". Many houseowners indignantly turn them down because they have come to blame them for the poor maintenance of the streets. But the few piastres they earn, hardly makes it worth their while to turn up on the job every day.

"My salary barely covers my transportation expenses," says an old sweeper . "At the end of the day, I have nothing to show for my effort. Young men refuse to do the job; there are easier and more lucrative ways of making a living. Soon the women will be taking over."

A car comes hurtling down the street, a little boy's hand appears at the window and the sticky wrapping of his ice-cream cone is snatched by the wind and swept into a dizzy spiral before landing in the gutter. "They should teach children better," says the old sweeper, picking up the wrapping with a groan. "If people don't take pride in their city, why should I?"



Disposable pets

Our new grey kitten obviously hated strangers. He went into hiding as soon as he heard the door bell ring. That is why, when a friend of ours turned up on our doorstep, expressing his desire to stay a few days, I was less than pleased, especially seeing that he did not exhibit the characteristics of an animal lover. Did he know we had several cats and were extremely fond of them? I asked him. He did not seem to think that they would be a major deterrent, because he remained firm in his intention to stay.

Every morning, leaving for work, I impressed upon him the necessity of checking that the doors and windows were properly shut, should he decide to venture outside. Under no circumstances was he to mess with the cats. "If you leave them alone, they won't bother you," I told him firmly. He had no burning interest in pets, he assured me. He followed my instructions faithfully, and after a while I relaxed. Things were proceeding smoothly. There had been no major confrontations, he had stepped on no tail. The grey cat in particular avoided him carefully, spending the day in my wardrobe and only coming out when he heard my voice.

One afternoon the friend called me at work. He sounded perturbed. "I had to go to the pharmacy," he said, "and on my way back, I saw your grey cat sunning himself in the street." My cats never go out, though the grey one had on occasions climbed the mulberry tree the branches of which extend onto the dining room balcony. I had, however, insisted that all windows remain closed while I was away. "Did you open any door or window?" I asked, trying to sound as civil as I could. I was sure he was getting bad vibes over the phone, and I made an effort not to antagonise him completely. After all, I wanted him to look for the cat. He had tried to call him, he informed me, and, moreover, had searched the house in vain. He had found a couple of gingers, a black and white cat and one completely black, but no grey.

Seething with unadulturated hatred for our visitor, I murmured a few words to the effect that I would be home shortly.

A few minutes later he called again. He was panting heavily, but announced triumphantly that he had caught the runaway. He was scared, however, because the animal was growling in the most menacing way and was attacking the other cats, who had taken refuge under the beds. He begged me to come back. The beast, he whined pitifully, was about to maul him. Where was my first aid kit? he pleaded; he had been badly scatched.

The grey kitten, if anything, was a coward. He was afraid of the bigger cats and had never attacked them before. What, I wondered, got into him? I had hardly put the receiver down than the phone rang again. "Please, come quickly, he is growling at me, he is growing bigger by the minute, his hair is standing on end, I am going to leave if you don't," the visitor yelped. Why don't you? I thought mercilessly. "He is a four-month-old kitten," I told him slowly, as if speaking to the mentally challenged; "surely a big boy like you can handle the situation. Why don't you hide in the linen cupboard until I come home?" I added, trying not to giggle maniacally.

I finally made it home. As I opened the door, a huge ball of grey fluff with piercing, insolent, green eyes confronted me, before catapulting itself outside, almost knocking me over. I just had time to observe that this arrogant tom was no acquaintance of mine and bore only a remote resemblance to my kitten. A big brother, perhaps? "I am here," moaned a strangled voice. It came from the linen cupboard. "Is he gone?"

Ignoring him, I ran to the dining room. The balcony doors were wide open. I called my kitten, who answered at once. I heard with great relief his excited mewing as he scrambled out of the branches of the mulberry tree. I turned to my guest, who had come out of the linen cupboard and was looking carefully around. He was no longer my friend. "I told you not to open the windows," I said sternly. "I was hot," he said. Now that he was no longer terrified, he could afford to be oversensitive and even a little critical of the attention I lavished on my cats. It was obvious, he said, that I preferred them to humans. "To some humans," I answered, looking him straight in the eye and hoping that he got the message. "How could you not see the difference between the cat you caught and a little kitten? You should have your glasses checked." He looked miffed. "For normal people, a grey cat is a grey cat," he said defensively, before heading towards his room, where he proceeded to pack his bags.

Fayza Hassan

Sufra Dayma

Turkish *kofta*

Ingredients:

1/2 kg. minced beef
2 onions (diced) + 1 onion (finely chopped)
1 green + 1 red bell pepper (diced)
1 medium aubergine (skinned and diced)
1 tsp. crushed garlic
1 cup tomato juice
1 tbsp. tomato paste
1 bunch parsley leaves (finely chopped)
Butter
Salt + pepper + allspice

Method:

Mix the meat with the chopped onion and season. Form into balls the size of a shelled walnut and put aside. Gently fry the garlic only until yellowish. Add the diced onions, the pepper, then the aubergine. Stir-fry them all for a few minutes. Add the tomato juice plus the paste and leave to cook, covered, over medium heat. Season and remove from heat when half-cooked. Place the meatballs in a baking dish, then pour the vegetable mix over them. Bake in a medium preheated oven until the top is reddish. Add the parsley after removing from oven. Serve with rice and a rich green salad.

Moushira Abdel-Malek

Restaurant review

La viande rose

Andrew Steele discovers that certain je ne sais quoi

There is something undeniably Gallic about Le Bistro, yet pinning it down can prove elusive. Perhaps it's the shinny glass balloon optic atop the Ricard bottle. Perhaps it's the glue and white colour scheme or the pristine tiled floor. The gurgling espresso machine, perchance, or the abstract prints that adorn the walls. Whatever it may be, it came as no surprise when the rather charming waiter addressed one in French. In fact, as one attuned one's ear to the ebb and flow of surrounding conversation, it became evident that Gallic was the tongue of choice of just about everyone present.

I like a roll, especially a hot one, and soft, hot and rather good were the offerings from Le Bistro's bread basket. Beers were served to us in the wineglasses that stood sentry on the table — an oversight or a individualist touch? Who can say?

The selection of starters available are all of a the salad variety, and a perfectly reasonable selection of said affairs adorns the menu. The mushroom and "Provence" varieties were, to paraphrase the nursery rhyme, the platters we chose to lick clean.

And lick them clean we did. The mushroom salade was a fine melange of raw, chopped button mushrooms, heaped into a mound with shredded lettuce, strips of tomato and dill pickle, and a good dose of a minced onion. The whole was lightly tossed in a very vinegary vinaigrette and just the sort of salad one would expect in eateries of a continental persuasion . Yum, and indeed yum. The salade of Provence was a simpler affair, thick slices of plum tomato — the kind which brings to mind the advertising slug " sun ripened". Said slices were positively swimming in an olive oil and fresh basil dressing, leaving a pleasing pool for the rolls to mop up. The unfortunate inclusion of a dollop of coleslaw in a cloyingly oily mayonnaise almost detracted from my companion's enjoyment, but not quite. With deft forkwork, he managed to isolate the offending garnish and catastrophe was avoided.

Nest came the meat. The meat for which Le Bistro is rightly renowned. Continuing the fungal theme, I ordered Medallions de Boeuf with a wild mushrooms sauce, while my associate plumped for the simpler pleasures of Filet Café de Paris. My medallions were well grilled, as requested, and served with disappointingly out-of-a-packet like croquette potatoes. The mushrooms in the sauce were no more feral than I am. In fact, they were of the same button variety as those in the salad. No bad thing, however, as the sauce was light and savoury, with that reassuring whiff of meaty juices so often lacking in sauce for a steak. An undertone of the bachhic variety added to its authenticity. The Filet Café de Paris was pink and bloody, and topped with rounds of that classic butter which, when spread, imbued the meat with a taste tried and tested the world over. This was served with, entirely appropriately, French fries. Both steaks came with fresh, al dente courgettes, tossed in garlic butter and parsley.

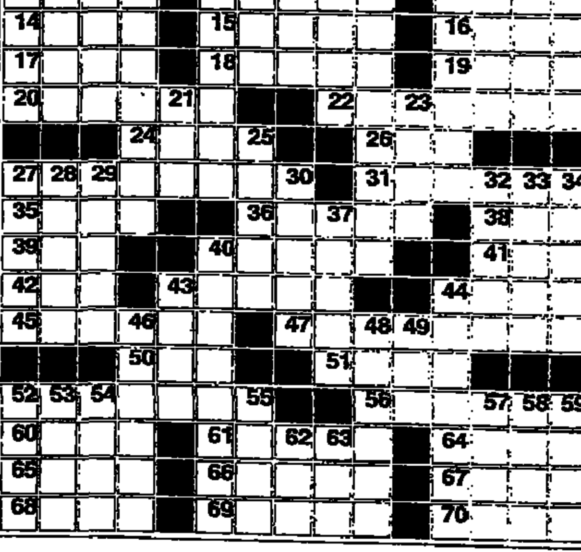
A breath of French air, then, and more reasonably priced, A good steak dinner for two with two Stellas and coffee to finish was LE85. You might even find that elusive *je ne sais quoi*.

Le Bistro, 8 Hoda Shaarawi St., Downtown Tel: 3927694

Al-Ahram Weekly

Crossword

By Samia Abdennour



Across
1. Encourage (4)
5. Stiff-backd; raise (5)
10. Crash; throw (4)
14. Seat of ancient Irish Kings (4)
15. More pleasant (5)
16. Name of a lake, port and canal in US (4)
17. Desirous; gluttonous (4)
18. Greyish brown (5)
19. Dossier; emery board (4)
20. Procedure; formula (6)
22. Device to prevent waste, hyph.wds. (7)
24. Twine; bundle up (4)
26. Violation (3)
27. At the present time (8)
31. Incomplete; downcast: not fulfilled (6)
35. Extra seed covering (4)
36. Accustom to something unpleasant (5)
38. Aware (3)
39. Small mass or bundle (3)
40. Positive electrical pole (5)
41. Have unpaid bills (3)
42. Dined (3)
43. Goaded (5)
44. Poker stake (4)
45. Tongue-lash (6)
47. Penetration; astuteness (8)
50. German prep. Attribute of nobility (3)
51. The Crucifix; a quarter of an acre (4)
52. Authorisation; permit (7)
56. Tie (6)
60. Soon (4)
61. Fiber used for cords obtained from agave (5)
64. Not a (4)
65. Deer (4)
66. Devoured (5)
67. Storey (4)
68. Opening; orifice (4)
69. Set of rooms (5)
70. In addition (4)

Down
1. Celebrity (4)
2. Asphalt (4)
3. An acid (4)
4. Fundamental (7)
5. Intestines (6)
6. Long narrow inlet of river (3)
7. Old French coin (3)
8. Type of edible mushroom, pl. (4)
9. Wealth; cherish in the memory (8)
10. Shelter; ward off; protect (6)
11. Diva's forte (4)
12. Slab at foot of window (4)
13. Foot part (4)
21. Small herd of whales or seals (3)
23. Grape plant (4)
25. Moribund (5)
27. Title of respect in India (5)
28. Declaim (5)
29. More expansive (5)
30. S. African barracuda (5)
32. Scotch and Irish expressing lament (5)
33. Salamander- like amphibians (5)
34. Dueling swords (5)
37. Cattle mammary gland (5)
40. Business establishments (8)
43. Well-known British college (4)
44. In music, moderately slow tempo (7)
46. Vindicate (6)
48. A geological period (6)
49. Neither's partner (3)
52. Thrash (4)
53. Prep. Expressing motion (4)
54. Fuel rock (4)
55. Jacob's borther (4)
57. Remove one's hat as a sign of respect (4)
58. God of war (4)
59. Wheel rubber covering (4)
62. Tit, jumbled (3)
63. Allow (3)

APED INCA LAIRS
DIRE ROOFGARDEN
SERFDOM FORM LA
ION HOOK WET
AMENT BARD BANC
BORE MELD TENTH
EVA VIAL HELD
DESCENT BEATERS
ARID HURL ROC
BABEL DAGO BETA
ORLE REIS SEDAN
ROE DULL PAS
EU GALE BACILLI
ASYMMETRIC [illegible]
LEETS EASE ETAS

Last week's solution



ble pets

Fayza Hassan

A safari in the Western Desert led to encounters of an unexpected nature, as **Khaled El-Fiqi** experienced, recorded in print and captured in a series of photographs



Desert treks of multiple choice

We took off at dawn and headed westward into the desert. The leader of our expedition, geologist Ali El-Kilani, knows the mountains, valleys, escarpments and oases of the Western Desert like the back of his hand. In fact, he helped draw up the current maps of the area and soon imbued us with his enthusiasm. We succumbed to the beauty of the desert and, as our journey progressed, were made increasingly aware of the remarkable contrast between the sun-baked earth and the deep shadows cast on it by rocks, of the vast expanse of sand dunes and the beauty of a delicate desert flower defying nature to grow out of the tiny crevice of a rock.

We were a group of 15 people and travelled in four jeeps. Our supplies were well organised, especially water, and each of us was rationed to one litre a day. Nevertheless, we had to stop at the various oases for fuel, additional food and, of course, to ensure that our water supply was topped up.

As we were heading southward towards Farafra Oasis, the most distant on our itinerary, we met an Austrian traveller and his wife on a cycling safari. It was an unusual encounter in a totally barren area. "Aren't you afraid to travel alone?" we asked them, to which they replied that they were not; that Egypt has good roads; that travelling is safe and that the scenery is unsurpassed.

"We do this trip together every year," said the husband. He went on: "This year we travelled from Cairo to Kharga Oasis, then to Luxor and across the Eastern Desert as far south as Marsa Allam. We then turned northward to Suez and crossed over to Sinai. This is a three-month trip and the cost is $1,000 per person. Our last trip, last year, was in the opposite direction, starting in Sinai and ending in Luxor."

We moved on and soon found ourselves in the White Desert, the so-called Mecca of the Germans because they like this part of the desert like no other. Jutting limestone formations have been fashioned into strange and exotic shapes by the wind so that it feels like entering a silent ghost city peopled with weird creatures. In fact they have a strange name too, yardungs, and are actually rocks that have taken the form of various animals, birds and human beings, some appearing in flight.

The White Desert is especially beautiful at sunset and at night when the moon is full. Our leader chose a place to camp and after a long and tiring journey in the desert, we danced and sang. Later, we settled down for the night and fell asleep, many of us on the sand, at one with nature.

We woke up at sunrise to make the best of the day and moved in the direction of Dakhla Oasis. Soon, we found ourselves passing through desertscape very different from the previous day. The colour of the sand was no long stark white and there was no sight of a yardung. We were passing through silky sand dunes for kilometre after kilometre. These moving sand formations are impossible to drive through, even for a four-wheeled vehicle, so the group asked if they could walk through the hot sand. They had heard that it is a good sport and strengthens the leg muscles and, moreover, that it is a cure for rheumatism. They walked bare-footed, not realising how difficult it would be, "one step forward and two backwards up a sand dune," said one member of the group. "Strenuous sport indeed," remarked another.

It was here, in the dunes, that we came across another safari. A line of camels was moving northward to El-Haiz. El-Kilani spoke to their leader and was informed that the camels came from Morocco and were being brought to Egypt especially for desert safaris. "They are more suitable for travel and riding in the desert than the Somali camels that come from the Sudan via Wadi El-Alaqi," the leader explained.

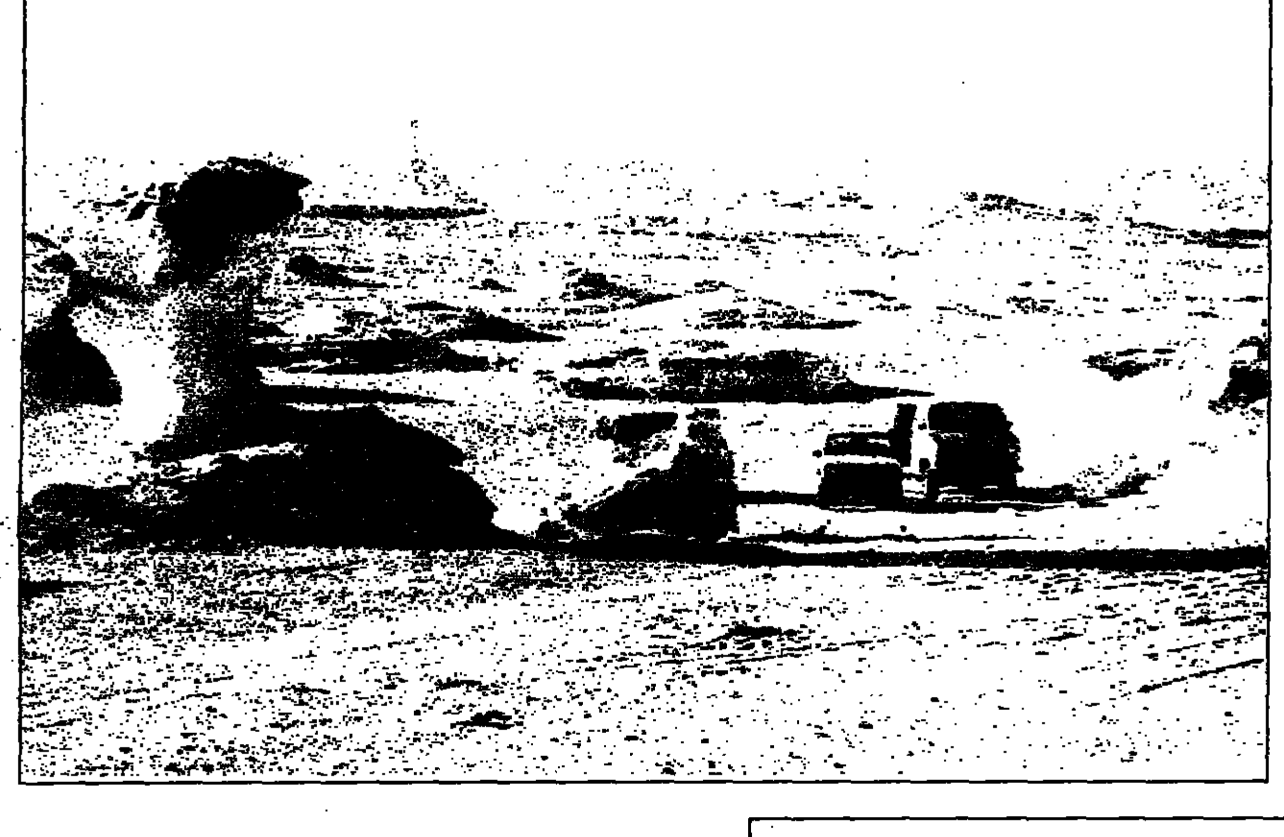
When we reached Dakhla Oasis, we found ourselves passing through another kind of desert. There, the depression is strewn with iron pyrites and petrified shells. This oasis is known for its antiquities and for the various crafts manufactured by its residents, pottery, baskets and palm leaf rugs, all used to adorn their houses but willingly sold to travellers.

We learned that the crafts of Dakhla Oasis are unique. Unlike other oases where palm leaves are wrapped around thin twigs, or simply woven together, these are decorated with strips of ribbon or material. Another woven item made from palm leaves is the *shamsayid*, a broad-brimmed hat unique to the area and worn by men in the fields as protection from the sun. These, too, proved to be popular among the travellers.

Due to the large deposits of clay around the village of Qasr Dakhla, pottery is quite a large industry there. Today's potters still work on foot-powered wheels, much as their ancestors did in Pharaonic times, and ancient kilns in the area attest to the long life of the craft.

Unfortunately, our trip to El-Qasr, the ancient city, was rushed because we had to move on to our next camp site before dark.

As we took off, however, I pondered on all we had seen; on the exceptional experience we had shared; on the unmatched beauty of the desert and on the special people who traverse its expanse: the self-sufficient couple who rode bicycles, the camel driver with his caravan and people like ourselves, a well-organised group of adventurous travellers who had heard of the wonders of the desert and wanted to see for themselves. It was a most rewarding experience.











Walking barefoot in the Great Sand Sea, driving through the White Desert, and taking refreshments on a hummock were some of the highlights of a safari in which we also encountered a pair of lone cyclists on an annual trip and a potter at work in Dakhla Oases. Evenings brought informal musical entertainment beneath the stars

Clearing the coast

NEXT month, a major clean-up will take place in the protected area of Abu Galoum in South Sinai. Up to 50 volunteers will spend two days collecting garbage from roads and beaches. Divers will be in charge of underwater cleaning. The clean-up is part of an environmental campaign launched by the international diving association PADI which plans to carry out similar campaigns in 100 sites around the world. Abu Galoum is particularly vulnerable to the effects of increasing tourism and inadequate waste disposal. Garbage from nearby Nuweiba finds its way into the sea where it is joined by what passing ships dump into the Gulf of Aqaba.

Malaysian flights

THE MALAYSIAN national airline will operate two weekly flights to Cairo starting next October. The flights are expected to increase tourism and trade and facilitate the travel of some 3,000 Malaysian students to Cairo.

Nubia on display

THE COUNTDOWN for the inauguration of the new Nubian museum, scheduled to open next October, has started. Over 350 exhibits have been moved to the new museum in Aswan, including the royal chambre that was once a part of a temple in Wadi El-Sebou' in Nubia.

Natural look for Giza Plateau

THIRTEEN modern houses, built on areas that have not been excavated, have been removed from the Giza Plateau in the second phase of developing the area. Natural materials will replace asphalt on roads that will be better lit but less accessible to car traffic. The end of the second phase in December will coincide with the completion of the Sphinx's restoration. Work to open 10 more tombs to the public on the plateau is about to finish. A mere 36 tombs are currently open to visitors out of a total of some 4,000 tombs in the area.

Grooming Tut

THE HALLS containing Tutankhamun's treasures at the Egyptian museum are getting a face-lift. The exhibits will soon be housed in new, better-lit display cabinets, bearing multi-lingual description. The renovation will be complete by 4 November, the 75th anniversary of the discovery of the young king's tomb in Luxor.

Mummies' debate

AN INTERNATIONAL conference on mummification will be held in Egypt in January 1998. The conference, sponsored by the Supreme Council of Antiquities, will be the first serious academic gathering to convene at the newly-opened mummification museum in Luxor.

Egypt sites the Internet

EGYPT is selling itself on the Internet. The Egyptian tourism magazine, a new electronic publication, supplies information useful to those planning to visit the country. Ways of travelling to Egypt, places to stay as well as historic facts and travel tips about the country are provided.

Sunny summer deals

Hotels and travel agencies are offering special prices for summer. Prices are valid for Egyptians and foreign residents

Travel agencies

New City Travel is offering trips to Paris, London, Damascus and Beirut. Trips to Paris go for LE1890 for 8 days including accommodation on breakfast basis. Another 15-day trip combines Paris and London for LE3990 including accommodation in three-star hotels including open buffet breakfast. A week trip to Damascus and Beirut costs LE2090. The price includes accommodation in four-star hotels on breakfast basis.

Hotels

Cairo

Pyramids Park Hotel, an Inter-Continental global partner resort, is offering a single room for LE160 and a double for LE180 including service fees and taxes, 20 per cent discount on all food items, free shuttle bus to city centre and free use of the exercise room. Prices are valid until October.

Sonesta Hotel Cairo is offering double rooms for LE220 and singles for LE200 including breakfast and taxes.

South Sinai

Sharm El-Sheikh

Sonesta Beach Resort Sharm El-Sheikh is offering a rate of LE260 for double rooms and LE190 for single rooms including breakfast, taxes and services.

Coral Bay Resort is offering a rate of LE120 per person for double rooms and is also offering a rate of LE700 for 7 nights including breakfast. Prices are valid until the end of September.

Dahab

Novotel Dahab is offering a rate of LE200 per person for double rooms for three days including breakfast buffet. The offer is valid until September 1997.

Red Sea

Sonesta Beach Resort Hurghada is offering a rate of LE266 for double rooms and LE210 for singles on half-board basis including taxes and service charge.

Compiled by **Rehab Saad**

Al-Ahram Weekly

11 - 17 September 1997

On the sidelines

Happy birthday to you

THE U-17 FIFA/ JVC World Cup has been an unparalleled opportunity not only to watch numerous top-flight football teams in the making, but also to eat numerous deliciously well-decorated cakes. The Egyptian volunteers helping organise group D have been providing free surprise parties for the players, to help take their minds off the stress of the competition. Two Ghanaian players celebrated their birthdays on the first and second of September in Port Said. Once the competition proper was underway, the Argentine head coach, Jose Peckerman, together with the head of the Costa Rican delegation, Roberto Carranza Echeverrie, were astonished to find a nice cake modeled on an appropriately soccer-related theme waiting for them after dinner. Peckerman, true to his reputation, gave his team only ten minutes to enjoy the celebration, whereas the Costa Ricans were allowed to stay as long as they liked. The tactic paid off, as Franco Costanzo and Gabriel Milito went on to celebrate their seventeenth birthdays just after their victory over the Costa Rican team.

Terms of endearment

IT IS striking to see the volunteers now and compare their manner and behaviour with the way they were when the teams first arrived. Then they were only translators, assistants, and organisers. Since then their roles have been extended, as they have come to help them with everything. They take them shopping. They show them round the city. Indeed, they have become so attached to the players, coaches and delegation they are looking after, that they have begun to wear their national shirts to matches like true fans. When, for example, Costa Rica lost their first match against Bahrain 3-1, the volunteer girls dressed in black to mourn their defeat. Abandoning all pretence at objectivity, they declared that their team was the best, but that all the Egyptians had been cheering for Bahrain and this had frightened their "babies". Now they glare at their opponents before the matches as if they were life-long enemies. When their team wins, they dance for joy as if they themselves had won. And when they lose, they commiserate with the players, to try and make things easier for them to bear.

White Magic

THE GHANA players are adamant that they do not practice black magic. But they do do some very unusual things. For example, during training, they often clap their hands suddenly. For matches, they wear a white bandage on their right wrist, and some even wear a bandage on both wrists. E.K. Afrianie, head coach of Ghana, explained away the mystery: the bandages are symbolic of a "white victory" - one achieved without cheating.

Generous winner

BEFORE their opening match, the Omani players distributed their national flag to the Egyptian spectators. They also gave souvenirs and T-shirts to the other three teams in the group.

Egypt-Alex in red

IN EVERY match in group C held in Alexandria, spectators wearing red T-shirts have arranged to sit so as to form the phrase "Egypt-Alex" picked out in red across the terraces.

Brazil cake

AT HALF-TIME during the match between Brazil and the USA, a big cake in the shape of a football pitch decorated with players wearing yellow and blue was brought out and cut by Joao Havelange, to celebrate the anniversary of Brazilian independence which fell that day.

Cheers in English

EGYPTIAN fans and spectators cheered the Omani team in English, shouting out "One! Two! Three! Four!", an ironic reference to the American team's 4-0 defeat.

Austria adopts Alex

ON THEIR arrival in Alexandria, the Austrian team paid a visit to the Qaitbay Citadel. They also visited SOS, a society and village for handicapped children and orphans, where they played a friendly match with the children.

Thais love Egyptian food

THAILAND'S players seem to love Egyptian food. People working at the hotel where the Thai players are staying complained that the players buy Egyptian food every day — dishes such as *tamiya, belila,* and *bessara* — and then cook them in their hotel rooms, which is against the hotel's regulations. Due to their tight budget, the players do not send their clothes to be washed or ironed, but wash them and iron them themselves in their rooms.

Germanic loyalty

MOST of those who cheered on the German team in their matches were not Germans, but Egyptian students from Egypt's German schools. These special fans are hoping that their loyalties will not be divided by having to see Egypt and Germany do battle in the final.

Two hours in the sauna

THE EGYPTIAN team spent more than two hours confined in unventilated changing rooms before their opening match against Thailand. The team and their coach, Dr. Mohamed Ali, spent the time sweating as if they were in a sauna. The exposure to such intense heat seems to have contributed to the team's apparent difficulty concentrating during the match.

Giza's triumph

CONSIDERING this is the first time they have provided computer coverage and information analysis for a world football championship, the staff of Giza Computer Systems have done an admirable job. During and after each match, complete and accurate analytical data is available instantly. When they were put in charge of the computing system for the U-17 World Championship, they carefully examined the information system used for the European Nations Cup, and used it as the model for their own improved version.

German tears

THE GERMAN team panicked when they saw the 100,000 Egyptian spectators who had come to cheer their juniors on in the opening match against Thailand. Some of them were even moved to tears, thinking they stood no chance if they had to play in front of so many spectators when they meet Egypt. However, two days later, after their victory over Thailand, the German players were laughing, not crying. They are no longer quite so afraid of the Egyptian fans.

Mum and dad

EIGHT mothers and one father came all the way to Egypt to cheer on their sons who are playing for the Austrian and American teams. They showed their worry whenever one of their sons was injured or had to be examined by physicians. The young players, on the other hand, want to do their best in front of their parents, but so far they've been unlucky.



The German tam "the machine" in their match against Thailand



Egypt's Ahmed Belal manoevering a Chilean player

photos: Amr Gamal

The 'machine' is back

A memorable 3-2 victory over Thailand, but it's still too soon for Egyptian fans to celebrate. Germany is back after a disappointing start, and they mean business. **Eman Abdel-Moeti** reports on group A

Egypt, Thailand, Germany, and Chile started their first matches cautiously last week, with each team still trying to identify the others' strengths and weaknesses. While Egypt and Thailand both came out fighting for their first encounter, which ended with a 3-2 victory for the Egyptian juniors, Germany and Chile seemed to have got off on the wrong foot, with a dull slow match.

Playing before a crowd of 100,000 inspired Egypt to give all they had in their first tie of the competition. It was an outstanding performance. Yet despite the awesome volume of the home crowd's support, the Thai players refused to put up the white flag and fought back to score twice. By the end, the two teams seemed very evenly matched.

Although the Egyptian team kept up continuous pressure on their opponents, the Thais were quick on the counter-attack. The match got off to a slow start, but when Egypt's Ahmed Belal scored the first goal, the pace picked up pretty quickly.

Thereafter the game was very open. The Thais, led by their captain Suksomkit Sutee, made several determined attacks on the Egyptian goal, but without getting the ball in the back of the net, thanks in large part to the skill of Egypt's goal keeper Ahmed Ikrami, son of Mohamed Ikrami, the celebrated former goal keeper of the national senior team.

Yet still the Thais kept the pressure up, and at last their chance came in the 29th minute. A carefully delivered ball grazed Ikrami's finger tips and came to rest in the corner of his net. This goal unsettled the Egyptian youngsters, who suddenly seemed distracted and disorganised. Thailand had at least three opportunities to score in quick succession, and only Ikrami's quick wits denied them. Then, just as they seemed to be elbowed out of the game, Egypt began to counter-attack. Ashraf Abu-Zeid's crosses put Ahmed Belal through on goal more than once, but the finishing touch still proved elusive.

However, it was scarcely one minute into the second half when at last Belal struck, driving the ball past the Thai goalie with a shot that took everyone by surprise. Under threat now, Thailand began to play rough, inflicting two injuries on the Egyptian team. Despite these hard tactics, however, Arabi El-Sayed Mahmoud was able to score Egypt's third in the 12th minute from a cross by Belal. Yet Thailand still refused to surrender, repeatedly attacking on the break, until at last they were rewarded as Wongeudee Kitsana scored, making it 3-2. This second goal seemed to whet their appetite for more, but Egypt denied them a draw, despite a number of defensive errors, thanks again to the quick-thinking Ikrami.

After the match Dr Mohamed Ali, head coach of the Egyptian team, commented: "We did our best, though there were some defects in our defence which we will have to try and overcome in our next matches."

For his part, the Thai coach Chanvit Polchevin said: "We were playing under pressure, but I am satisfied with my team's performance." He added: "The Egyptians are tall and tough. They are very fit, and their technique is good, especially when it comes to crossing into the box."

The match between Germany and Chile was a strange one by any standards. They are both strong teams, yet their play was very slow and cautious. Chile was, if anything, more in control than the Germans, who seemed at first to be at a complete loss for ideas. Germany has a reputation for consistency, Chile for strong possession marred by poor finishing. On this occasion, both teams played a strong passing game, but seemed intent on playing it well away from their opponents' goal.

The atmosphere was more appropriate to a friendly match than to an international championship, and the play frequently dissolved into long stretches of tedium. It was only in the 35th minute of the second half that the Germans plucked up the courage to try and mount a full-blooded attack. They were rewarded for their daring with what proved to be a decisive goal by Silvio Adzic.

Chile's head coach, Vladimir Bigorra, was reluctant to be interviewed after the game. He was only prepared to say that his team's performance had not been up to their usual standard. But Pablo Ubeda, the Chilean striker, felt that his team had done their best, controlling possession throughout the whole match, and had just been unlucky not to score: "We played five matches to qualify for this championship and we scored 21 goals in them. I am really surprised that we couldn't score tonight. It was a strange match."

Expert commentators watching the match agreed that Germany has a very strong defense, which made it very difficult for Chile to score. Chile, on the other hand, dominated the midfield play, which is why Germany were not able to organise any serious attacking movements — save for that one crucial occasion.

Egypt went into their second match hoping for a victory over Chile, after this lacklustre performance. But their expectations were soon overturned. For Chile, this match was a matter of life or death. Their fighting spirit had returned and they came out determined to win.

Both sides played well in the first half, though it was Egypt who had the upper hand, and Ashraf Abu Zeid put his country ahead in the 36th minute. In the second half, however, Chile seemed the stronger side. After Francisco Viveros almost scored from a header, Dr Mohamed Ali decided to bring on Mohamed Eid for Mohamed Ali. The result was apparently total confusion in the Egyptian team. Taking advantage of their opponents' disarray, Chile stepped up the rhythm, and the inevitable eventually happened: Manuel Villaboles equalised in the 23rd minute.

Towards the end, the game became very physical, as both teams were clearly feeling the tension. Eight minutes from full time, Mexican referee Alcala Pineda Gilberto showed the red card to Ashraf Abdel-Latif, and Egypt were down to ten men. They managed to hold out for a draw, but the match ended in disappointment for the team and for the 75,000 fans who had come to cheer them on.

Two hours after Egypt had failed to assert themselves against Chile, Germany proved that their supremacy did not belong to the past by defeating Thailand 3-0, thus replacing Egypt at the top of the group with six points. The German "machine", as they are known in Egypt, roused themselves to give a superb performance. Their defence was completely impenetrable and they dominated the match from beginning to end. The Thais scarcely got a look at the ball.

Germany put their opponents under pressure from the first minute and never eased up. Thailand refused to surrender without a struggle, and fought hard to gain possession, but to little or no avail. When they did manage to mount a counter-attack, they ran straight into the stone wall of the German defence. As their frustration mounted, their play grew rougher, and eventually after several fouls they gave away a penalty from which Sebastien Diesler opened the scoring in the 26th minute.

Throughout the second half the Thai players grew ever more tired and frustrated. Their striker Suksomkit had just unleashed a powerful shot on goal, narrowly missing, when the German defender Fabio Morena found himself on the end of a counter-attack, to score his team's second goal in the 17th minute. The Thai goal keeper Harapong Kalahan was rapidly proving the main obstacle to even more total German domination, but even he couldn't stop the third and final goal from Steffen Hofmann close to the end of the match. By then, the Thais had effectively abandoned any lingering hopes they might have had of getting back into the game.

This German team is not the German team that qualified for the championship, as they are now too old. In fact, the team that is competing here in Egypt is the youngest in the competition, as most of the players are under 16 years old. They have only been together as a team for two months, and have never played any competitive matches, only two friendlies in England.

The Germans were delighted with their victory over Thailand. As Deisler said: "We managed to keep possession most of the time, and attack rather than defend, unlike our match against Chile. We were not hemmed into our own half as much". Deisler is the only player left over from the earlier German team.

German coach Bernd Stober said: "We didn't demolish Thailand and we won't demolish Egypt either. We simply looked for the weak point in the other team and did our best." The German players, however, are not said to be looking forward to their match against Egypt — not because of the Egyptian players themselves, but because of the crowd. As Stober said: "If the Egyptians know how to use this big crowd to their advantage, they can reach the semi-finals." However Stober's faith in Egypt remains to be proved. Now that the German "machine" is back on track, they are leading group A on six points, followed by Egypt on only four. That puts Egypt in an awkward situation. For the team they have to beat to avoid elimination is — Germany.

Spain takes the lead

Mali and Mexico will be fighting for a place in the quarter-finals when they meet this evening in Cairo, where their decisive match has been moved. New Zealand's inexperience, however, has been cruelly punished



A Spanish player stuggling with a Mexican for the ball

photo: Medhat Abdel-Magid

If there is a team that deserves to be dubbed the underdogs not only of group B, but of the entire U-17 World Championship, it is New Zealand. **Eman Abdel-Moeti** writes why. They lost both their first two matches, 4-0 to Mali and then 5-0 to Mexico. Meanwhile Spain have established themselves at the top of the group, beating Mexico by the skin of their teeth, and then winning more convincingly 1-0 against Mali.

Defeating New Zealand was a piece of cake for a team as quick and strong as Mali. Faced with an opponent whose passes were both easy to read and often inaccurate, Mali dominated the field throughout the entire match. Although this is the first time they have qualified for the U-17 World Championship, the Africans proved that they had earned their place with their hard work and considerable skill.

Mali seemed to be constantly on the attack from the very beginning. The first goal came after 24 minutes, scored by Cita Sido. New Zealand tried to pick up the pace in response, but they could not match their opponents, and were rapidly forced back into a defensive game. Mali were soon building another successful attack, which ended in a second goal by Gendi Boubakr in the 32nd minute of the first half.

The New Zealand players returned for the second half determined to pull one back, but their efforts were in vain Indeed, it was becoming a bit of a mystery how they ever managed to qualify for the tournament. The game was now completely one-sided. Diara Mohamed took the third goal in the 20th minute, and Bobeka the fourth and last in the 42nd minute with a brilliant strike which earned him the coveted accolade of man of the match.

The contest between Spain and Mexico produced a rather more interesting clash between two quality teams. Both gave outstanding performances, marrying enthusiasm with technical excellence. Spain dominated the first half, their defence effectively blocking any attempts by Mexico to attack. Spain's David Huete scored the first goal in the 14th minute, and his team mate Miguel Mateos added a second from a corner in the 30th minute.

As the second half started, the Spanish seemed to relax, resting on the laurels of their two goals. Mexico seized the opportunity, and had soon equalised, thanks to their superior speed. Spain had several opportunities, but threw them away, and both teams began to look rather tired. Just when they seemed content to settle for a draw, Mexico gave away a late penalty, and David Huete scored giving Spain an unexpected victory.

After the match, both coaches expressed their satisfaction with their teams' performances, though the Spanish coach, Juan Santisteban, was clearly happier than his Mexican colleague. As he said: "We got what we wanted, and what we came for."

Mexico recouped some ground by demolishing New Zealand 5-0 in their second match. For every goal Mexico scored, New Zealand seemed to get a yellow card, as if that was their only hope of accumulating something. Two of the Mexican goals were scored by Omar Gomez. Another fell to Ricardo Martinez from a free kick just outside the penalty area, when he curled the ball around the wall and into the net. Saul Salcedo also scored from a free kick, and Gomez set up the final goal for Edwin Santibanez to head home.

While the New Zealanders were at the travel agents booking their return flights home, Mali was fighting for a place in the quarter-finals against Spain. It was a thrilling match of attack and counter-attack, despite getting off to a slow start. Mali in particular gave a superb performance against a highly experienced and skillful Spanish side. Both teams competed hard throughout, but strong defence and tight man-marking on both sides meant it was almost impossible for either to score. Yet despite the lack of goals, there was never a dull moment. Finally, in the 42nd minute of the second half, David Huete scored to give Spain the victory and lead them to the top of their group.

Spain took six points from two matches. Mexico is lying in second place ahead of Mali on goal difference. New Zealand brings up the rear with zero points.



The Austrian team visiting SOS in Alexandria photo: Hussein Fathi

Brazil and Oman reach quarter-finals

Thanks to their impressive victories over the USA and Austria, Brazil and Oman have qualified for the quarter-finals, regardless of the result of their match today in Port Said. **Abeer Anwar** reports from Alexandria on the adventures of group C

Group C got off to a rousing start with high-scoring victories for two of the favourite contenders in this year's championship. Thanks to their early lead, Brazil and Oman are now guaranteed places in the quarter-finals that are due to begin on Saturday.

The opening match between Oman and the USA was played before a packed stadium of 17,000 spectators. Oman were the surprise discovery of the 1995 U-17 World Championship in Ecuador where, competing for the first time, they were placed fourth. Their intention of doing even better this year was evident, as the American goal was under pressure from the very first minute. Not only is the Omani team ambitious, but they have learned to play a tightly structured game under their English technical manager, Colin Dobson. In the 26th minute, their hard work began to pay off when they went ahead through a goal from Mohsen Salah.

The USA, perplexed and disturbed to have conceded this first goal, lost no time in conceding a second, when Juma Nasser struck after 40 minutes. From that point on, all hope was lost. In fact, even the American coach was forced to admit that his players seemed unwilling to chase the ball. Their defence opened right up, and Oman completely dominated the second half. Man of the match Hashem Saleh scored twice, in the 46th and 52nd minutes, to lead his team to a 4-0 victory.

The American pre-tournament preparation programme had been one of the most elaborate, including 25 friendly matches, but it had all come to nothing. Trainers and managers cast around for a culprit to blame and lighted, predictably enough, on the crowd. The local fans cheered for Oman. Jay Miller, the USA coach, seemed indignant: "Why do you cheer for Oman and not the USA?" he asked, adding: "I think that the supporters had an effect on my team, especially after the first two goals." Mubarak Sultan, Oman's coach, responded more graciously — as well he might: "We did not expect to be so strongly supported by the Egyptian fans. Doubtless their cheering played a part in encouraging our players."

Miller did admit that technical factors also played a part in his team's defeat: "We made a couple of defensive mistakes, which we'll make sure we avoid in our next matches." But the result was still a shock for a team that had performed very creditably when faced with tough opposition during their preparatory tour. America has a big name in junior football. They are the only country that has participated in all the world junior championships since they began in 1985. They had also beaten every other team except Mexico to come first in the 1996 COCACAF qualifying tournament.

While the USA were pondering this painful defeat, Oman were holding a big party at their hotel to celebrate their victory.

The second match in the group pitted Brazil against first-time participants, Austria. Brazil, like Oman, have a point to prove: the U-17 World Championship is the only one of the FIFA cups that they have never won. Austria gave them an easy introduction to this year's tournament, and the game quickly turned into a demonstration match for the South American champions, who romped home 7-0. It was a "very easy match," Carlos Cesar, the technical manager, remarked afterwards, with his characteristic gift for understatement.

The seven goals were shared between seven players: Diogo (7), Fabio Pinto (13), Geovanni (16), Rodrigo Ramos (37), Matuzalem (43), Ronaldo (74 pen) and Anailson (78 pen). Silva Matuzalem was named man of the match.

The Brazilians excited their many Egyptian fans and confused the Austrians by changing tactics constantly in an exhilarating display of skill and energy. American coaches who had come to scout out their next opponents went away with no clearer idea of how they might play or what their game plan would be. There is no single plan when Brazil plays. They are as inimitable as they are unpredictable.

After the match, Cesar tried to play down their opponent's rout. "The game was easier than I thought, because I did not know anything about them. We won the match easily but this does not mean that the Austrians were no good. On the contrary." Meanwhile, Austria's Paul Gludonatz blamed his teams' lacklustre debut in the Championship on the high temperatures which have greatly affected the players' performance. The Spanish coach, who is one of the most senior figures in European youth football, also said that in all his career to date he had never lost 7-0. But then, he added, "I had never played Brazil."

Having dispatched Austria, Brazil then went on to overcome a reinvigorated US defence in a closely fought match which they won 3-0. The outcome, however, was far from a foregone conclusion. The Americans appeared to have learned from their defeat at the hands of Oman, and their two-on-one defensive strategy prevented the brilliant young Brazilians from opening the scoring for more than an hour. This was something of a heroic achievement, given that Brazil is the strongest team in group C, and the USA the weakest.

However, the North Americans' declaration of independence could not last forever. Jorge Castro finally broke through to score in the 66th minute, drilling the ball into the lower left-hand corner of the net. Nineteen minutes later, Adiel Amorin made it 2-0 and the hostilities were brought to a close with a third by Matuzalem just before the final whistle.

The Brazilian coach responded to his team's victory with characteristic modesty, pointing out that: "We don't have to score seven goals in every match."

Austria, for their part, were able to break their duck and score their first goal of the tournament against Oman, though unfortunately that was not enough to make up for the three which they conceded. Radhwan Mairooz's header opened the scoring after 18 minutes. Hashem Mohamed converted a corner in the 44th minute, and he then went on to score again in the 20th minute of the second half, thus giving Oman their second clear victory and a certain passport through to the next round of the competition. Austria found some consolation four minutes later, when Alexander Ziervogel placed a long shot in the upper right corner of the Omani net, but this lone goal came too late to save them from elimination.

Ghana in waiting

Port Said has witnessed a close fight for the leadership of group D. **Nashwa Abdel-Tawab** was there to follow the teams' first two matches

With four points and five goals in two matches, the reigning champions Ghana have moved a little uncertainly into first place in group D. Yet they began with a goalless draw against Argentina in which their strength in attack was more than matched by their opponents' tight defence. Throughout the 90 minutes, Ghana were always the more interesting team. At the individual level, they have talent and skill in abundance, and their no 18, Owusu Afriyie, was named man of the match. But try as they might, they just could not grind the South Americans down, and their attempt to tough it out cost them two yellow cards. Argentina's coach, Jose Peckerman, was more than happy with the result of his defensive tactics. "The Ghanaians seem much older than their years. Their skill on the ball and their strength in the air are phenomenal for U-17 players," said Peckerman. He added frankly: "If it wasn't for the strict regime of nutrition, sleep and relaxation which we follow, they would have thrashed us 5-0 at least."

Ghana's second match proved the wisdom of Peckerman's words. In something more like their accustomed style, they routed Bahrain 5-1 despite a crowd that was strongly behind their opponents. Two goals in the first ten minutes restored the Africans' high spirits, and effectively demoralised Bahrain. Ghana suffered a slight set-back in the 61st minute, when Quaye Dan was sent off, leaving them with only 10 men. Bahrain quickly capitalised on their advantage to pull a goal back in the 72nd minute thanks to Amer Saad Jasser, but Ghana responded in force, and were soon playing tightly again, betraying no sign of fatigue. Indeed, they fought on right up to the end as if it was they who were losing, scoring twice in the last 10 minutes. The Egyptian fans may have favoured the Bahrainis to begin with, but they couldn't help but be impressed by the skill and strength of the young Ghanaians. Man of the match was Ghana's no 8, Abubakari Jakubu.

It was Argentina who arrived in second place, with four points but only one goal. If their first match against Ghana had been a true test of character, their second was a disappointing outing. Against a weak Costa Rica team, they played badly, still managing to win 1-0. Even more than with the result, though, Peckerman was disappointed with the yellow cards that were given against two of his players. It has always been a key part of his strategy that his teams play the ball cleanly at all times. Fouls, in his view, are always unnecessary. This approach won his U-20 team the Fair Play Award at the World Youth Cup in Malaysia three months ago.

Bahrain, who have been very strongly supported here by the local fans, played very well in their first match against Costa Rica, winning 3-1 and raising many hopes, before they fell foul of the powers of Ghana. If Bahrain can still cherish hopes, however, Costa Rica for their part know exactly where they stand. After their defeats at the hands of both Bahrain and Argentina, they became the first team in all four groups to be eliminated.



Bahrain & Ghana photo: Ahmed Abdel-Razik

A rare man

Jose Nestor Peckerman, Argentina's head coach, talks about his career as a coach and his unconventional recipes for success

Playing alongside the defending champions Ghana in group D, Argentina have drawn a great deal of attention, for their style as much as for their success, **Nashwa Abdel-Tawab** reports. They play the ball, not the other players, relying on skill and avoiding physical contact and intimidation. They also stand out for their idiosyncratic training programme and the strict regime they follow in their hotel. All this is due to one man — Jose Nestor Peckerman.

What is the secret of his success? When his team is in training, Peckerman shares every aspect of their lives, depriving himself of everything he deprives his players of. He trains and plays alongside them. He will not let himself be interviewed, photographed, or interrupted in any other way. At matches, he is the only coach in group D who is to be seen wearing a well-cut suit, along with the whole of the Argentine delegation. It is Peckerman who set the trend for natty dressing that is now common among South American managers and trainers — witness the Brazilian and Chilean delegations.

But more than his dress sense, it is the strict regimen of nutrition and relaxation which Peckerman imposes on his players which have made him a respected figure among coaches and an object of some fascination for reporters. The system may seem harsh, but it works. Peckerman's U-20 team won both the Fair Play Award and the World Youth Cup in Malaysia three months ago. Thus Argentina is proving to the world that fair means can prove better than foul.

Like many great managers and coaches, Peckerman did not have a particularly distinguished career as a player. He started playing soccer at the age of 14, joining the Argentinos Juniors team when he was 19. At the age of 24, he moved to Columbia to play as a professional with Independiente Medellin, but then, aged 29, sustained an injury to his left knee during a match, which put an end to his career on the field. "All the time I was a player," he remembers, "I used to criticise my coaches. I would analyse their instructions and imagine I was the coach whose commands had to be obeyed. Eventually, my dream came true."

After his injury, he went to study coaching for three years at the Argentina Football Association (AFA), one of the most important technical schools in the world. On leaving the AFA, he worked as assistant coach to two Argentine clubs, Estudiantes (Buenos Aires) and Chacarita Juniors, before taking over his own club. For nine years he trained the Argentina Juniors, then moved to an important national club, Kolo Kolo, for three years.

During his first years as a coach, he decided that he wanted to work mainly with under-20s. "The U-20 teams are the real seedbed of the Argentina national team. It's better to work with the younger generation, train them the way you want and then leave their talent to grow," he says. In 1993, Peckerman was appointed as coach to the national U-20 and U-17 teams. In 1995, his U-20 team won the World Youth Cup, while his U-17s took third place. This year, the U-20s repeated their triumph. He is determined the U-17s will win their competition too.

"It is very difficult to train an U-17 team to go for gold," says Peckerman. "They are still young, and they have even less international experience. They panic easily when the spectators start to cheer the other team. Taking responsibility for them in a World Cup competition is like teaching a baby how to walk." Peckerman's principles might also seem to make the task he sets himself and his players even more difficult. He insists on fair play at all times: no pushing or kicking opponents, no fouls — in fact, no body contact at all. It is this creed that distinguishes Peckerman from virtually every other coach in the world: "We must train them to play for the sake of the game, and to win without coming on hard, but simply by playing well, and relying on their talent." Against Ghana, his team got through the full 90 minutes without seeing a single yellow card, even though their opponents were a tough team who play hard on the ball. Their second match against Costa Rica was less satisfactory: two players got yellow cards for pushing. But Peckerman's response is only the more illuminating. He knew the players in question were upset because they had disappointed him and not kept to his instructions. It was enough that they knew they had made a mistake There was no need to discipline them, or even to say anything. A rare attitude, coming from a rare man — one who has done more than any other to make the dream of fair play in soccer a reality for a new generation.

Mansoura shines

THIS week saw disappointing results for two out of the three Egyptian teams participating in the various African Championships.

In the Cup Winners' Cup, Arab Contractors, the title-holders, were held to a 2-2 draw in Cairo by Tunisia's Etoile du Sahel, while Mansoura slammed three goals past Jomo Cosmos of South Africa.

Sahel have looked formidable throughout the Cup Winners' Cup and were just seven minutes away from becoming the first African side to defeat the Arab Contractors, when Haythem Hussein equalised. The four-goal thriller saw Mahmoud El-Aref give the three-time champions an early lead, before second half- goals from Makram Soliman and Samir Raoun put Sahel ahead. The Arab Contractors are now looking forward to their fourth title.

In the same competition, South Africa's Cosmos fell behind after only 10 minutes in the intimidating cauldron of Mansoura. The loss of injured midfielder Samelko Jam-Jam before half-time only compounded their problems. Early second-half goals from Ayman Mobeb and Tawfiq Sakr completed a 3-0 victory for this intrepid Egyptian team that has not conceded a goal in its last five African cup ties.

Meanwhile, in the League Champions' Cup, title holders Zamalek of Egypt were losing 2-0 to Club Africaine of Tunisia. Club Africaine needed two points to get their Champions' League ambitions back on track, following a goalless draw with Obuasi Goldfields of Ghana in the opening mini-league round. Their 2-0 victory came through goals from Fawzi Rouessi and Jamel Imam. The result has turned group B into a melting pot, with the Tunisians just one point clear of both Ferroviario of Mozambique and Zamalek.



Edited by **Inas Mazhar**

Athens to host 2004 Olympics

WAVING Greeks flags and Olympic placards, more than 20,000 people turned out on Sunday to welcome the Committee that has helped guide the Olympic Games back to their birthplace. "This time we Greeks are called on to show that we will not only take from the Olympic Games, but we will give," said the head of the committee, Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki. "The Olympic spirit that we have within us should be our gift to the whole world."

The International Olympic Committee voted last Friday in Lausanne, Switzerland, to award the 2004 Olympics to Athens, surprising many experts who had predicted the games would go to Rome. The other cities vying to host the prestigious event were Stockholm, Cape Town and Buenos Aires.

US Open

MARTINA Hingis ended a near-perfect run through the Grand Slam by winning the US Open, her third major title of the year, in a virtually flawless performance on Sunday against America's Venus Wiliams. In the first round of a rivalry that will doubtless dominate the future of the women's game, Hingis' 6-0, 6-4 victory showed that right now her all-court game is more than enough to cope with Williams' power. It was the youngest match-up of finalists in Grand Slam history, the 16-year-old Hingis against the 17-year-old Williams. Hingis had shown great maturity and confidence all year, winning both the Australian Open and Wimbledon. Now her triumph at the US Open has lifted her into the company of the few great players in history who have won three majors in a year.

Patrick Rafter, meanwhile, took his place in Australian tennis' hall of fame when he overcame the fastest server in history to win the US Open men's singles and secure his first Grand Slam title. Rafter was left staring at his racket to see if it had cracked after Greg Rusedski unleashed a record 230 kph serve in the fourth set, but still managed to claim the day with a decisive 6-3, 6-2, 4-6, 7-5 victory.

Tied to sixth place

EGYPT'S national junior handball team was placed sixth at the World Junior Handball Championship for the second time in a row. The fortnight-long competition was held in Turkey. The juniors are obviously following in the footsteps of the senior team, who also took sixth place in the Men's World Championship twice running, in Iceland in 1995 and again in Japan in 1997. Senior events usually take place four or five months ahead of the junior event. Egypt will host the 1999 Men's World Championship, while Qatar will host the junior event in the same year.

Egypt dominates

THE EGYPTIAN national junior team dominated the Arab Junior Swimming Championships. The one-week event, which brings together swimming, diving and water polo, was held in Kuwait. Competing against eight other countries, Egypt took first place with a grand total of 81 medals — 46 gold, 22 silver and 13 bronze — giving a total score of 1951 points. Kuwait, the host nation, followed in second place with 1290 points, made up of seven gold, 16 silver and 20 bronze medals. Third place went to Algeria with 938 points (two gold, six silver and nine bronze).

Fifty-two new Arab records were set, 42 of them by Egyptians, with Syria adding five, Algeria three and Kuwait two.

Egypt's Hani El-Teir was the best single swimmer in the championship, with a total of nine gold medals.

There was also an outstanding performance from the Egyptian water polo team, which took the gold medal, beating Saudi Arabia 13-8, Syria 10-6 and Kuwait 30-0. The team and its superstar Moetaz Abdel-Rahman captured the imagination of the public, drawing fanatical support not only from Egyptains, but also from many other Arabs.







Wrongly arrested for having blown up Cinema Metro, Fouad rejoices at his release; Fouad with Minister Boutros Ghali; with Jacques Chirac; with Muammar Al-Gaddafi; and with President Hosni Mubarak

Saad Zaghloul Fouad:

Opposition undivided



photo: Randa Shaath

His history of opposition to foreign occupation, and regimes in power, reads like the history of Arab world since the 1940s — in reverse

It must have taken great purpose, and an unusual single-mindedness, to fight for so long, in so many places. He marched in demonstrations and fought in armed resistance movements against the British and a few of their successors. Perhaps most importantly, from the vantage point today offers, he wrote about the war from the front. A pen in one hand, a grenade in the other: is that image of Saad a myth? He is an old man today. But he was young once.

Saad Zaghloul Fouad blurts out: "Sir, I have killed more than 100 British soldiers. But I did not blow up Cinema Metro." The bomb is later proved to have been planted by the Macchabe, a Zionist organisation. The chief prosecutor, however, has obtained a confession, and he is not about to let Fouad off.

Saad Zaghloul Fouad: what's in a name? This journalist's involvement in the resistance to British occupation may have been due to his patronym, or to the context of the time. He was to carry out his first assignment in Qasr El-Nil, where the British barracks stood. He was to stand on the bridge, as though admiring the view, a hand grenade concealed in his pocket. Then he would throw the grenade at a group of British soldiers before getting away unnoticed, leaving the impression that the grenade had been flung from a passing car.

"I saw three British soldiers and pulled the safety catch. Then I noticed an Egyptian making his way towards me. I pushed back the catch and, as soon as he was out of the way, I prepared to throw it again. I threw the grenade at a group of seven soldiers."

Fouad and his companions got away unnoticed before the political police squad could arrive, and headed to Café Astra to cool off.

No sooner had Fouad arrived at home, however, than the police were knocking at his door. The crime was communism. Fouad was released soon after. No charges were brought against him, although most of Egypt's communist cadres were detained in the case. The year was 1946.

Shortly afterwards, several other operations were conducted against the British occupation army. The most significant one targeted a British club in Ibrahim Pasha (today El-Gomhouriya) Street. Because of the large numbers of people involved, Fouad used four explosives. Escape was easy because of the many buildings surrounding the club. The police arrested a number of Jews living in one of the neighbouring houses. Strangely, Fouad was later to carry out a second attack on the club. He had gone to meet Salama Moussa at the YMCA. Opening the window of the men's room, Fouad discovered that it overlooked the British army club. Tossing out a grenade he kept in the inside pocket of his jacket, he quickly walked away.

Resisting the occupier, therefore, could be just a coincidence: in the right place at the right time, with the right weapon. Fouad is not a callous man. His chief concern was to send a clear message to the occupying forces and to confirm the existence of an armed force for resistance within Egypt.

The attacks carried out by Fouad's group and others may have been one of the main factors which caused Winston Churchill, then the opposition leader in Britain, to criticise the presence of British soldiers in Egyptian cities, when they were only needed in the Suez Canal zone. The British government withdrew all of its troops to the Canal borders. At the time, Fouad wrote an article stating that, while the British had, in fact, left Cairo, they had left their agents behind: the ministries of supply and information. Perhaps it was this article that led to his arrest. The group to which he belonged had decided to blow up the two ministries, choosing to operate at night and thus spare the lives of the employees. It was a fatal mistake to drive to the site. Fouad's group used a car belonging to the *Wafd Vanguard* newspaper, but forgot to change the licence plates. They were quickly apprehended.

The explosion at Cinema Metro took place on the same day. Well aware that two explosions on the same day would lead to a campaign of arrests, Fouad hurried to place the explosives in his safekeeping in the student's locker he kept at the American University in Cairo. Thereafter, the University's unwitting involvement in ridding Egypt of the British increased: Fouad and his group held their clandestine meetings at the AUC library.

Following his arrest, Saad Zaghloul Fouad's case reads like a classic drama, complete with "good guys" who rescue the hero at the last minute. The chief prosecutor could taste victory. Fouad's confessions meant that numerous pending cases, the cause of great concern among the British and the Egyptian authorities loyal to them, could finally be closed. A team of 33 Egyptian lawyers, led by Makram Ebeid and Abdel-Fattah El-Tawil, however, volunteered to defend Fouad and his group. They quickly realised that the chief of prosecution was anxious to curry favour with the occupation force. When the chief prosecutor refused to authorise them to meet their client, they seized the opportunity and advised Fouad to deny categorically that he had confessed, then obtained the replacement of the chief prosecutor. At this point, the good guys were in a winning position. The court sentenced Saad Zaghloul Fouad to hard labour, a sentence which was reduced to two years' imprisonment. Since Fouad had already been in prison for three years during the investigation, he was released.

Egyptian society as it was in the '30s had served to mould Fouad as a child. One incident in particular marked him. During a conference held in Beni Suef, Fouad's home town, an attempt was made to assassinate Mustafa El-Nahhas, then the opposition leader, during a conference there. Fouad can still hear the voice of the neighbourhood butcher as he shouted: "El-Nahhas Pasha is in our town, and Sedqi is trying to kill him. Help! El-Nahhas is our guest and leader." It was the first time that Fouad had seen anyone move willingly into the line of fire, as the villagers pressed forward to protect El-Nahhas. Fouad remembers *Amm* Hassanein, who used to walk through the alleys every evening, singing as he sold his sesame seed buns. "I started crying hysterically when, from the balcony of our house, I heard the shots and saw *Amm* Hassanein covered in blood, cheering 'Long live Egypt!'. I wanted to run down to him, but my older brother pulled me back into the house, afraid that I would run into the path of a stray bullet."

The struggle for national liberation would become the focal point in Saad Zaghloul Fouad's interests. In secondary school, he participated in many demonstrations. Elected chairman of the students' executive committee of the Beni Suef schools, he led demonstrations and made speeches exhorting the students to participate in the struggle. He caused so much trouble that the minister of education ordered his transfer from Beni Suef Secondary School to the Khedival Secondary School in Cairo.

On 4 February 1942, British tanks besieged Abdin Palace to impose a Wafd government on the king. Egyptians strongly resented their intervention in the domestic affairs of the state, and Fouad led his first demonstration in the new school. It was also the first time he was ever arrested. As he was being led away, he tried to take his accordion with him, but the Interior Ministry *official snapped: "Just where do you think you're* going? On a picnic?" When he was released, it was to discover that he had been expelled from school. He moved to Shubra Secondary School. After graduating in 1944, he entered the Faculty of Law.

Sometimes, Fouad's life seems to have been made up of a series of arrests and expulsions. His capacity for making — and getting into — trouble seems to have been limitless. Through it all, his stubborn determination prevailed. He was expelled from the University after he and his colleagues addressed an ultimatum to the British government on 4 November 1945, during negotiations over the British evacuation. They wrote: "We hereby warn the British government to order the evacuation of its forces from Egypt within one week, failing which Britain will bear responsibility for the resulting bloodshed. Long live the Revolution." Since the option of a legal career seemed closed, Fouad registered at the American University, where he had decided to study journalism.

Fouad was the common denominator in most of the mass arrests of the period. He was arrested with Wafdists, communists, and members of Misr El-Fatah. The only organisation he rejected was the Muslim Brotherhood, which he criticised openly in the articles he wrote in *Rose El-Youssef* and *El-Gomhour El-Masri*.

In February 1946, a national strike was organised as the struggle for British evacuation reached its peak. Fouad began to take an active part in the armed struggle. "We had asked Sedqi Pasha to order the British to remain in their barracks. The demonstration was supposed to leave Al-Azhar and head for Ismailia (now El-Tahrir) Square. The column of marchers stretched unbroken from Al-Azhar to Ismailia Square. When we arrived, bullets began to whistle through the air towards us. I saw many barefoot marchers ripping pieces of material from their *galabiyas* and setting them on fire. When I came to, I found myself in Qasr El-Aini Hospital. The Egyptian army had intervened, but there were 11 dead and 30 wounded."

When he was released from hospital, Fouad had made his decision. He began recruiting from among students who were known for their political neutrality. They pledged to restrict their struggle to the British occupation military establishments, and to leave British civilians alone.

Following the British evacuation, Fouad turned towards the Arab countries. He became a press correspondent, but did not let that hamper his support for liberation movements, especially Libya and Algeria. At the time of the Tripartite Aggression, he decided to join the fighting in the Canal Zone, but the Egyptian military attaché in Tripoli told him he could participate in the struggle without leaving the country. Fighter planes were taking off from British bases in Libya, and the attaché supplied Fouad with bombs and ammunition.

His presence at the front lines of many Arab liberation movements gave him ample material for the 28 books he has written. The first, *Injustice in Egypt*, which he wrote in 1946, was distributed clandestinely by the students. The second, *Palestinian Feda'iyin on the Battlefield*, was written between 1968 to 1970, as he fought by his subjects' side.

Anyone involved in armed struggle, one assumes, attaches scant importance to the matter of his own life and death. In 1959, in Iraq, Fouad was very nearly killed in the midst of the struggle between Abdel-Nasser and Abdel-Karim Qassem. Fouad was writing in condemnation of Qassem's regime. He was arrested and condemned to death, but the Egyptian military attaché managed to transport him to Kuwait out of Iraq.

To Fouad, patriotism does not merely imply a pen, or a sword. It means more than that — little things, too. In Egypt and abroad, he never gave up smoking Egyptian cigarettes. In Beirut, in 1958, and as US troops were landing on the coast of Lebanon, he sent his articles to Cairo by diplomatic pouch, along with a request for two cartons of his favorite cigarettes — a now defunct brand, Hollywood. He continued to smoke the same brand until it went out of production. Then he reverted to smoking Cleopatras.

During the '70s, Fouad joined the struggle to liberate Eritrea from Ethiopian rule, training fighters in tactics and guerrilla warfare. Back in Cairo, disillusioned with their cause, he tore up the book he had been writing. But he did not question the principles he held dear.

Today, after years of struggle worthy of any action film, and time in Paris, exiled from his home, he has returned at last. When he met the president, Fouad had a change of heart to announce: "I have been a member of the opposition for over 40 years. It is now time for me to retire." Mubarak, however, replied: "You must continue as you have always done. Opposition is an indivisible part of the country."

Profile by ***Hani Mustafa***

Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris

♥ One of my greatest concerns, as you may know by now, is to keep myself informed of any event of consequence that may be taking place in our brilliant intellectual milieux. One such event to which I dashed, needless to say, was the exciting presentation of my dear friend **Gamil Ibrahim Attiya**'s book "Alexandrian Papers" at the Mubarak Public Library. Hosting the event was Ambassador **Abdel-Raouf El-Reedi**, director of the library, while writers **Bahaa Taher**, **Ibrahim Fathi** and **Ibrahim Abdel-Meguid** gave an informal account not only of the work at hand but also of Gamil's oeuvre in general. Questions from the public filled not only the allotted time but carried on well into the reception afterwards and though I had to go home to rest my grey cells, the rumour has it that many adjourned to another less formal locale to continue the discussion.

♥ The following day I could only congratulate myself for having wisely chosen to have an early night as I contemplated gorgeous **Inas Hamam** being given away in marriage to dear **Tarek Atia** at the Shepheard's Hotel. After the elegant *zaffa*, the guests were treated to a full performance of the Tannura dance and, seeing these clever dancers twirl madly to the beat, I couldn't help myself and had to join in. Such an exhilarating experience, but quite exhausting, I can tell you! **Inas** and **Tarek** were rather unmoved by my performance, surprisingly enough. They just smiled away and sipped *sharbat*, looking amourously into each other's eyes.



Tarek and Inas, glowing with nuptial bliss

♣ And before I leave you to your own endeavours, dears, a word of warning. No matter how busy you may be next week, make sure to attend the photo exhibition *Children of the Planet Earth* at El-Hanager Art Centre, which starts on tomorrow and is organised by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the Information and Culture Centre of the Embassy of Japan. You will have a chance to see an exceptional collection.



One of the children of the planet Earth

